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ABSTRACT

In building a recent series of innovative community schools, Boston has created more diverse outdoor spaces than typically surround urban elementary schools. Being more complex both in program and design, the community schools have created complex patterns in use that were not anticipated. This research was commissioned to determine what has been happening in these newly conceived spaces and to recommend ways to design more usable open space areas. In this report "open space" is taken to include all outdoor areas: playgrounds, parking lots, entranceways, totlots, circulation areas, and miscellaneous left-over corners. A scenario provides a composite picture of a day at a hypothetical school. Ten functions that open spaces perform are identified and described in terms of activities they support. Then follows an analysis of the ways in which each of the community school open spaces creates the opportunities for these activities. Patterns emerge in the way open space opportunities are created and these patterns form the basis for recommendations that suggest how to support or discourage each of the ten open space functions. Several recommendations are put forth to reduce the problems at schools that must be sited next to parks. (Author/MLF)

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FROM RECESS TO HANG-OUT: THE DESIGN OF OPEN SPACE OPPORTUNITIES

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FROM RECESS TO HANG-OUT...

The Design of Open Space Opportunities

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SUMMARY

In building a recent series of innovative community schools, Boston has created more diverse outdoor spaces than typically surround urban elementary schools. Being more complex both in program and design, the community schools have created complex patterns in use that were not anticipated. The Public Facilities Department commissioned this research to determine what has been happening in these newly-conceived spaces and to recommend ways to design more usable open space areas.

These open spaces are scarce resources in dense neighborhoods and important connections between the school and neighborhood. The spaces often go unused or harbor a few angry teenagers who disrupt both school and community. Observations and interviews at seven schools have generated clues about how designers, intentionally or not, create the opportunity for various activities.

To illustrate the functions which community school open spaces must serve, a scenario provides a composite picture of a day in life at a hypothetical school. In spite of the marked differences in the environments of the seven schools studied, the kinds of activities at the schools were quite similar.

The scenario traces through the day, from arrival of kids, through the morning clean-up, recess, and informal play in the afternoon, to hanging-out in the late evening. Though the immediate conception of the function of school open space is to support recess, recess is the most constrained of activities, seemingly operated for ease of supervision by teachers. At the better functioning schools, the open space creates the

opportunity for an intricate network of informal play: several major games such as punchball or street hockey at the centers of a network of smaller activities (yo-yo's, throwing a ball against a wall), connected by kids on bicycles cruising between activities and overseen by mothers on the porch of a triple-decker or older kids sitting up on some vantage point.

Ten functions which open spaces perform are identified and described in terms of activities they support:

recess
team sports
informal play
hanging (non-threatening)
hanging (threatening)
parking
circulation
maintenance
vandalism
no use

Then follows an analysis of the ways in which each of the community school open spaces creates the opportunities for these activities. The seven schools are very different: one school is up against a steep hill on a small site, all hard-topped but differentiated by level changes, walls, and the angular shapes of the building. At another, the building is carved into the side of a wooded hill, leaving deep gullies between building and puddingstone embankments. In another, the play area is dominated by gargantuan sandboxes. There is as great a variety in the way the spaces are used. Sometimes beautifully functioning spaces and disaster areas are on the same site. Yet patterns emerge in the way open space opportunities are created.

These patterns form the basis for recommendations which suggest how to support or discourage each of the ten open space functions.

Special attention is devoted to the practise of siting community schools next to existing playgrounds operated by other city agencies. Although this ostensibly is a way to provide substantial amounts of open space for a school without taking a great deal of land,

the practise has, in fact, left schools with very few opportunities for outdoor activities. For instance, at only one of the four schools sited next to parks was the field used for recess. At the others the distance from classroom to field is so great, the twenty-minute recess is consumed in getting to and from the field. It is recommended that the practise be avoided, if possible, but because of the scarcity of land may be an overriding concern, several recommendations are put forth to reduce the problems at schools which must be sited next to parks.

In fact, whether a school is on its own site or sited next to a park, the opportunities for activity and not the shear size of the facility will make the difference in whether it is used or not. To work well, to be well-used, urban elementary school open spaces must both reduce the opportunity for crimes or harrassment and create the opportunity for meeting friends and doing exciting things. Urban open space has the schizophrenic potential to create either a no-man's land or a center of neighborhood activity. Policy and design decisions can go a long way in determining which outcome occurs.

INTRODUCTION

Older elementary schools in Boston present a consistent image: two or three stories of heavy brick construction sited in the middle of a paved lot. The lot could be used for parking, recess, or line-up. Sometimes stencilled hopscotches, four-squares, line-up lines, or parking lines demarcate a special use for an otherwise indistinguishable area.

This image changed dramatically with the introduction of the Community Schools Program and the construction of a series of new schools intended for joint community and school use. The playgrounds and the rest of the open space took on new forms as the City and its architects experimented with new designs in anticipation of new uses. At one school, the space is entirely hard-topped but differentiated by level changes, walls, and the angular shapes of the building. At another, the site is wooded, strewn with puddingstone boulders, and the building is carved into the side of the hill, leaving gullies between building and puddingstone embankments. Still another is dominated by gargantuan sandboxes. Some community school sites include their own playgrounds; others have little or none of their own space but are sited next to existing City parks.

Being much more complex than the older schools, both in program and in design, the community schools have created complex patterns of use that were not anticipated. Where there had been only a single use which ended by the middle of the afternoon, there are now two groups, school and community, who use the building and grounds throughout the day until late at night and on weekends. The grounds and facilities themselves attract many more informal, unprogrammed

activities than did the simple rectangular lot.

The uses of open space areas are not equally valued by all those involved in them. The high cost of repairs and complaints from neighbors, principals and community coordinators are among the indicators that all is not well. To design a community school open space that works well for all users, the designer must provide the opportunity for a wide range of uses but minimize the potential for conflict. Inevitably, judgments will be made in which some uses are encouraged and others discouraged. The best mechanism for making such judgments is an open design process through which users can participate in the design decisions and can develop a commitment to the school and its open space areas. Unfortunately, this approach is not always followed; and even when it is, "users" are often difficult to identify and those who are identified cannot always fully anticipate needs and problems which may arise in the future. Experience is frequently a fine aid in this process.

The aim of this report is to relate some of the open space experiences at existing community schools in Boston, particularly with regard to the ways in which physical design supports the functions of open space. The result, we hope, will be to improve school open space design so that users can more fully recognize the potential of these areas and will be encouraged to use them productively.

What is in This Report?

The first question asked is, what are the functions of community school open spaces?* In Chapter I, a scenario of a day at a community school open space depicts the kinds of activities which take place and the function of the open space in the activities. Based upon experiences at existing community schools, patterns of open space needs are projected through the scenario. These patterns have no claim to being immutable, nor are they necessarily the patterns which the City should reinforce. However, they represent existing conditions and any attempts to improve the picture should be based in an understanding of the

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*In this report, "open space" is taken to include all outdoor areas: playgrounds, parking lots, entranceways, totlots, circulation areas, and miscellaneous left-over corners.

kinds of activities that presently occur and the ways in which environments support or discourage them.

How the actual conditions at seven community schools support or discourage different activities is the issue in the second chapter. For each of the schools, the qualities of the open space which shape its function are examined. Then design recommendations set forth ways to support each of the ten activities.

Finally, the third chapter focuses specifically on the practise of siting community schools adjacent to existing playgrounds designed and operated by separate administrative agencies. Because open land is difficult to obtain, Boston has sited some of its community schools adjacent to other playgrounds, with these serving as the bulk of the school's open space areas. We examine how this arrangement is working and arrive at policy guidelines.

Methodology

The research for this study has had two phases. The first was an in-depth analysis of the open space at two of Boston's elementary community schools: the Kent in Charlestown, and the Marshall in Dorchester. In the second phase, five more elementary community schools were included and special attention was given to the differences between community schools with their own open space and community schools without their own open space but adjacent to park playgrounds. The five additional schools are the Lee (near Franklin Field), the Holland (Meeting House Hill), the Agassiz (near Forest Hills), the Hennigan (Parker Hill), and the Murphy (near Neponset Circle).

Of these seven schools, only three, the Kent, Marshall, and Holland control their own open space. The other four have some limited outdoor areas but rely on adjacent park playgrounds for their open space.

The research methods used in this study included observations of the open space areas at each of the schools, and interviews with relevant individuals or groups. Observations were carried out at different times of the day, on different days of the week, and in different seasons. The kinds of activities and the characteristics of the users were noted. The condition of equipment, the location of paths, the presence of litter, and other variables were recorded. In addition, the following groups of people were inter-

viewed:

- city administrators
- principals
- community program staff
- teachers
- custodians
- community leaders
- other users, mostly children and teenagers

As is implied, this research brought us into contact with many people who gave generously of their time. We greatly appreciated this and hope that the implementation of some of our recommendations provide a fuller thanks.

Chapter One

THE FUNCTION OF OPEN SPACE

Recess--those twenty minutes of every school day in which teachers forego attempts to teach and adopt a strategy of containment--is the most commonly intended function of school open space. But "a day in the life of" school open space is much more complex. On the one hand, the percentage of time in each day spent in recess is relatively small; on the other hand, the proportion of outdoor space used by this activity is often not large.

To understand the function of community school open space, we will trace through the patterns of use that could be expected on a typical school day--not that this is easy to identify. Things will be very different on a slushy day in winter compared to the first decent day of spring. And, of course, more different still in the summertime when school is not in session.

But following the activities on a decent day in spring will serve to elucidate the major patterns in use and the different perspectives on use of school open space.

Morning

The first arrivals on a typical school day are often children. Their parents have left for work, perhaps dropping them off at school on the way, but at any rate ensuring that they are out of the house and headed for school. As more kids come, small groups form and some games get underway. If there is any totlot equipment available, it is used for a combination of sitting, talking and playing. Many mothers come, either by car or on foot, to drop off their children.

If it's a rainy day, most kids would be huddled under overhangs in front of doorways or in other sheltered places, but others will be out playing even in

the rain, bouncing a tennis ball against the wall and otherwise ignoring the rain.

Custodians and a few others arrive early, too, but most teachers start arriving after 8:00. Parking is scarce, especially safe parking, where a car won't get stolen, broken into, sideswiped or otherwise damaged, and which is close enough to the school so that teachers won't have to worry about being assaulted between parking lot and school building. Late-comers often park in visitor slots or illegally on the street to avoid using distant or unsafe parking lots. At the Hennigan, they have hired a full-time guard to watch the parking lot. He sits up in a second-story room, surveying the lot from a window.

At about 8:15, one or two teachers come outside to supervise the growing number of kids. At the Agassiz, all children are ordered off the timberform play equipment at 8:15 because the principal feels responsible for making sure that no one is hurt.

Then the buses come. As kids get off, they are sent into different areas of the school open space, according to grade. After the confusion surrounding this initial sorting process has subsided, line-up begins. In this transformation of free-play and chaos into order, kids respond to whistles and calls as they line-up along fences, walls or painted markings. Each class then files into the school and all is quiet on the playground.

Soon after classes begin, a custodian comes out, pulling a trashbarrel on wheels. This chore seems to be one of the day's worst. Picking up paper, sweeping up broken glass, the labor causes a great resentment to well up within the custodian against the youths who have nothing better to do at night than to come around and trash up the school yard. Where the surface is hard-top and level, the custodian can use the sweeping machine; but since the playground is cut up by walls, curbs and steps, much of the area cannot be covered by this equipment.

A kid or two may be assigned to help the custodian, but "unless he's a good kid, it's more trouble than help." At any rate, having some kids doing clean-up doesn't seem to stop other kids from messing the place up at night.

Only some of the areas are cleaned. At the Kent,

there is a wading pool that is a miniature dump: ripped up lamp-posts, old clothes, busted bicycle parts, and more--all covered with a thick layer of busted glass and litter. The mechanical difficulty of sweeping the stepped sides of the wading pool, its original designation as a "community facility" and the fact that it is too small for use during recess combine to justify skipping it during the sweeping rounds. If there is any foul or racist graffiti, the custodian may paint it out, otherwise he finishes up and heads in before recess begins.

The doors open for recess and 200 kids stream out. They head into the nearest hard-topped area. Near is important because teachers don't want to spend the time and energy necessary to walk kids long distances for a recess that is only twenty minutes long; also, because teachers like to be near the building in case of an accident and because they are worried about personal security. Hard-top is important so that the kids stay clean and teachers avoid complaints from parents and custodians.

Different age groups tend to play in different areas. Kindergarten teachers especially seek out areas where the young children won't get trampled by older ones. But depending on the availability of spaces, a full range of classes may be in the same recess area.

Kids' activities also tend to separate according to sex; sometimes this separation is enforced, as at the Kent, where boys play on one side of the dotted line and girls on the other. The primary activity for the boys is play-fighting--karate, hopping and checking or wrestling. Occasionally, an informal game of basketball or soccer is started, but in most cases, organized games would take up too much space and there is too much interference. Balls are thrown and kicked around, sometimes into the streets. Girls are less active, often sitting and talking, but otherwise jumping rope, playing foursquares, hopscotch or similar games.

Throughout all this, the four teachers or aides stand in a prominent position where they can survey the recess activities. They talk amongst themselves and perhaps to a few girls. Occasionally, they might supervise a punchball or other kind of pick-up game. But generally, their strategy seems to be one of containment. Fighting or violence is generally not cause for interrupting their conversations, but if a kid is seen slipping around a corner.... They will also yell out

at kids breaking certain safety rules: "No playing on the steps!"

As the allotted time runs out, there is a long blow from a teacher's whistle: Most everybody "freezes". A minute later, when all is still, there is a second whistle, and the kids fall into lines according to their classes. One class along a fence, another class along a wall, the classes then march in.

The recess cycle is repeated several times until all pupils have had a break from the classroom routine. Unless it's raining, in which case there will be no recess at all.

When recess is not on-going, the grounds will be quiet, occasionally crossed by an adult passing through or by a kid playing hookey and just hanging around the school tossing rocks at the tall lampposts which give off a resounding gong when hit. Several young men might come by with a basketball and shoot a few baskets. If kids come out for recess, they may stick around; then the teacher may raise a protest, and the principal may or may not be able to evict them. After all, it's a community school.

Recess for the kindergarten kids happens separately. Each teacher takes his/her class out on their own schedule. In some schools, there are special recess areas for each kindergarten class, which the teacher usually finds either too small or too dangerous. Sometimes, the teacher won't take the class out at all because there is broken glass everywhere and excrement in the sandbox. One kindergarten teacher hadn't taken her class out in a year; occasionally, they went out into the hall for some exercising. If there is a totlot, kindergarten class will go there for recess. The totlot seems to work well for sitting around and made-up games, as well as for their intended uses. However, few teachers at schools without totlot equipment miss it; they anticipate incidents of accidents and vandalism that they feel would outweigh any recreational value.

Afternoon

Around noon, parents begin to arrive with young children, signalling the advent of the second session. Parents will sit in the totlot and watch over their own or other children until the morning session children come, often to be met by their parents.

In the afternoon, there may be a kindergarten

recess, but otherwise the school yard will be quiet. If, by some chance, on this day there is an outdoor gym class, it will be a smaller group, probably only one or two classes. Since all the gym teachers have been cut in an austerity budget, the only gym classes that take place occur if a teacher, usually a male teacher, decides to lead a gym class himself. The gym class is longer, approximately forty minutes, and the class will walk a longer distance to get to an open field for an organized game like softball.

The school day ends with the dispersal of classes to the waiting buses, parents and streets. The number of people milling around drops off until it stabilizes into the afternoon hanging patterns.

Sitting, watching, waiting groups collect at several key locations to check out what is happening. Ideal locations are those which are at junctions through which many others will pass on their way to and from activities, especially right outside the doors to the community center. Also good are areas with a view to activities.

When a group hanging around reaches a "critical mass", or when a critical friend arrives, a group will head off to play basketball or will leave the area. At the Kent, a group of younger kids slowly collects at the top of the hill above the main hard-top area, watching the few older kids below use the playground. When the younger group grows large enough, they swoop down and set up their punchball game. They plan it so they are well entrenched before any organized interference can be mustered.

Pick-up games materialize and dematerialize as the afternoon wears on, but some noticeable patterns develop in the way the playgrounds are used.

The games get started in their respective playing areas, such as a street hockey game in a parking lot. Several layers of activity develop around the game. Along the edge of the playing area are the spectators, sitting on curbs, automobiles or bleachers. These people are primarily watching the game, perhaps hoping to join in, if not today, next year when they are older. Beyond the immediate zone of spectators are the peripheral activities: the yo-yo's and superballs. These people are not engrossed in the game but are up for being around the action. Further in the distance are the "caretakers". Mothers on the third floor balconies

of triple-deckers or perhaps a community coordinator, if the office is well-placed to allow a view to the outdoor playing areas. These people are ready to come out if some accident or trouble occurs.

Another common phenomenon is cruising between activities. Bicycles and motorbikes crisscross fields and climb ramps to check up on what is happening and bring the latest word from one group to the next.

There are episodes of vandalism; most of them seem to be motivated by a desire for something to do, as fighting is an outlet for fun during recess. A kid might tip over a waste barrel and collect all the bottles, take them to an unpopulated and unusable area and toss them against the wall. Or a kid will hang onto a sapling tree and whip it back and forth.

Evening

Activity falls off toward dinner time. A few older guys go one-on-one at the basketball hoop for some exercise after work and before heading out for pizza.

As activity picks up again after dinner, it is a slightly older group of kids; the average age tends to rise as the evening wears on. Again, kids gather at key points to survey the people and activities.

Parents begin arriving by car around 7:15 for a meeting at the school. Cars park as close as possible to the entrance doors, irrespective of signs. They go to considerable lengths to avoid walking through groups of teenagers. A late-comer heads around the school, trying all the doors along the way. After banging on one for a minute, she calls out, "I don't see why they can't have doorbells."

There is plenty of activity. The community school coordinator has taken out tennis poles and nets, and has set them up for an all but unmanageable crowd. Most of the high intensity lights glaring down from thirty feet in the air are unbroken.

Out back, five younger kids head for a dark corner with a twelve foot 2 x 8, with smaller pieces of wood nailed in at roughly equal intervals. The board is propped up against the wall, and they climb up onto the roof. They take turns jumping off the low roof to the ground, most of the time not getting hurt. Shortly, they all climb back up and pull the ladder up, disappearing from sight.

The dark areas behind the school are where most of the trouble happens. A rule of thumb is that while hanging "out front" is part of normal activity, when kids are hanging out back, there may be trouble. An empty purse laying on the ground by a fence attests to the area's function in neighborhood life. Other activities reportedly include bringing stolen cars to the area to strip them down.

The new community coordinator has cracked down on teenagers hanging around school, so there is not as much of that recently. But over the course of the evening and into the night, enough litter and broken glass is generated to keep the custodian busy the next morning.

This scenario represents a composite picture of events at different schools. Most of the events could have happened at any school, though the density of activity included for the purpose of describing the full range of activities is probably greater than would be the case at most schools. In spite of the marked differences in the physical environments of the seven schools studied, the kinds of activities at the schools were quite similar. The major differences were in the amounts of various kinds of activities. Some schools are intensively used, such as the Kent, which is located in one of the most densely populated neighborhoods. The Holland open space is used much less intensively. There are also differences in specific activities: bottle breaking is a serious problem at the Kent, but not at all a problem at the Murphy.

Although the differences in use are a function of complex causes, there are strong indications that the physical design for the open space is an important factor. In the next chapter, we will look at how the characteristics of the different schools influence the use patterns.

To structure that analysis, we have categorized the different types of activities described in the scenario to allow a systematic review of the differences between schools. This list is not all-inclusive but reflects the most important functions of open space.

Ten Functions of Open Space

RECESS: A short period of free play for approximately 200 kids supervised by four teachers. The kids will probably play in small groups: boys mock fighting, shooting baskets, playing games, and girls sitting talking, jumping rope. The teachers will stand and supervise from good vantage points.

TEAM SPORTS: (including physical education) These games require standardized playing surfaces and equipment; i.e., basketball, softball, and soccer. Spectators and peripheral activities should be expected, and spectator areas (e.g., bleachers) considered.

INFORMAL PLAY: These activities include pick-up street hockey, practise shooting a puck, batting practise, hide-and-seek, basketball or football practise, punchball, etc.

HANGING: (non-threatening) This first type of hanging is the sitting, waiting, and watching variety which characterizes much of the open space activity. Kids wait for friends to show up before starting a game or sit and watch other games or street life. It takes place out in the open and a primary purpose is to interact with passers-by.

HANGING: (threatening) This kind of hanging is characterized by small groups hiding in corners drinking, smoking, and plotting revenge on the school, cops, or other offensive elements of society. It represents a threat to others using the open space or to neighbors and is often costly in terms of theft and destruction for the school.

PARKING: Parking cars for school or community activities.

CIRCULATION: This includes lining-up before school begins, as well as getting from one part of school open space to another. Teachers fear long walks to parking lots. Long walks to and from recess can use up a significant percentage of the time intended for energy-releasing free play. Cruising from one area to another is an important part of life in the open space.

MAINTENANCE: Though kids and other users rarely engage in maintenance, it is a significant activity which is substantially impacted by the design. Custodians responsible for keeping school open spaces clean claim they do not have the time or staff to do the work. Consequently, most open spaces are inadequately maintained.

VANDALISM: Property damage, particularly intentional destruction, is a serious problem at some schools.

NO USE: In some spaces virtually nothing happens, not even hanging out. It is important to include this "null" activity in this set because it represents the frequent wasting of space around community schools.

Chapter Two

OPEN SPACE OPPORTUNITIES

Having sketched out the functions which community school open spaces perform, we now look specifically at how the actual conditions at the seven community schools studied support or discourage these functions. Some open spaces provide ample opportunities for recess, others provide better opportunities for team sports. A couple of the schools are notable primarily for the support they lend to muggers. The range of conditions and the differences between schools is impressive. With a better understanding of what characteristics of open spaces support various activities, designers are in a much better position to create environments which will support those activities desired by both the community and the school.

Agassiz School

RECESS:

The Agassiz has very little hard-topped open space, only the basketball court. However, there is a readily accessible field for use in good weather, and the totlot with the timberform equipment appears to be one of the most popular outdoor areas at any of the schools.

TEAM SPORTS:

The field is good for softball and other team sports requiring such a facility. However, the primary users are the PRD leagues, not the school or community program. (When asked about "their" field, members of the Community School Council asked, "What field?")

The basketball court is very small, so that it could not be used for any tournament games.

INFORMAL PLAY:

The field, totlot, and basketball court attract a lot of informal play. (The principal orders all kids off the timberform equipment at 8:15 because the equipment is so popular that someone is likely to get hurt!)

HANGING:
(non-threatening)

There is a proportionate amount of watching activity. Kids sit on the bleachers by the field, at the sitting areas between the edge of the field and the street, and on the sidewalks and embankments by the basketball court. Groups of young kids also sit around the eastern side of the school, typically smoking cigarettes.

HANGING:
(threatening)

It was one of the prides of the Council that their new coordinator had vanquished the gangs of kids who used to frequent the school open space., Some of the trouble areas have been the courtyard behind the school and an old barn that was behind the parking lot. The

courtyard used to have plexiglass doors but bubble gum soaked with lighter fluid was used to burn through the plexiglass. The doors are now all steel.

PARKING: The parking lot has new lights and the "barn" which had been a favorite hanging spot there has been torn down so that now the parking lot is usable at night. Even so, it is insufficient in size for meetings at night, according to Council members.

CIRCULATION: Circulation around the school presents no special problems. The ballfield fence is well-designed so that there are frequent opportunities to enter the field, yet the fence prevents balls from escaping.

MAINTENANCE: There is relatively little open space for which the school is responsible. The major problem area is the bleachers by the field, which is used heavily and covered with glass but only infrequently cleaned by PRD.

VANDALISM: The back courtyard is the outdoor area in which there has been the greatest vandalism problem. Also, as windows in the office area of the school are broken, they are being replaced with steel plates.

NO USE: The only area not used is the lot connecting to South Street. Though thought of initially as a valuable connection to South Street, it does not seem to serve that function. One attempt was made to plant a small garden in one part, but the garden was "prematurely harvested".

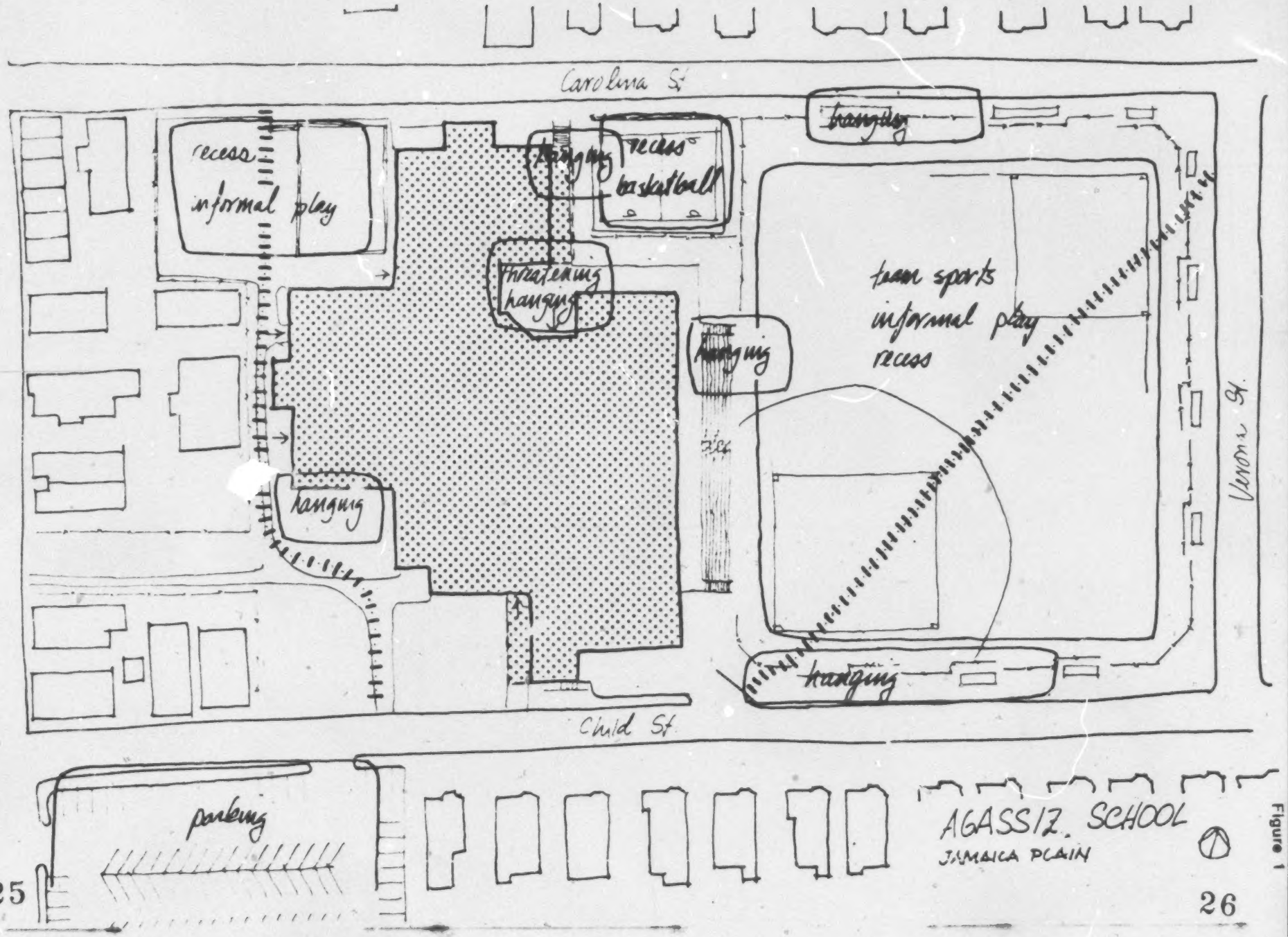

Carolina St.
triangle
recess
informal play
hanging
recess
basketball
threatening
hanging
hanging
team sports
informal play
recess
Vernon St.
hanging
hanging
Child St.
parking
AGASSIZ SCHOOL
JAMAICA PLAIN

Figure 1

Hennigan School

RECESS:

The areas immediately around the school are too small, not level enough, covered with swatches of hard-top and immense sandboxes (completely unusable). There is no equipment, but the principal was not interested in obtaining any. Kindergarten recess areas are too small.

The PRD field is occasionally used by older classes, but it is too far away, there are other groups to contend with, and security is an issue.

TEAM SPORTS:

The PRD field is sufficient for most field games, but markings are needed. The basketball court is an ancient wreck. There are no physical education teachers, so the school rarely uses the field for team sports. The community coordinator had enough to worry about on the inside of the school.

INFORMAL PLAY:

Children were almost never observed playing near the sandbox and hard-top areas around the school.

Sometimes kids play on the broken swings and other equipment in the far corner of the PRD field.

HANGING:
(threatening)

The corner by the garage entrance and air conditioner is the clearest example of a threatening hanging area. Visibility into the area is poor because of pillars, overhanging building, and air conditioner. Even the main front entrance becomes a threatening area after school is out because there is no activity along the street. The gully and corners by the gym entrance are also a problem after-hours.

HANGING:
(non-threatening)

Kids often congregate at the far corner of the PRD field. The proximity of the totlot, home plate, the field house and the basketball court bring a lot of activities together.

Sometimes a similar situation develops around the gym and swimming pool entrance.

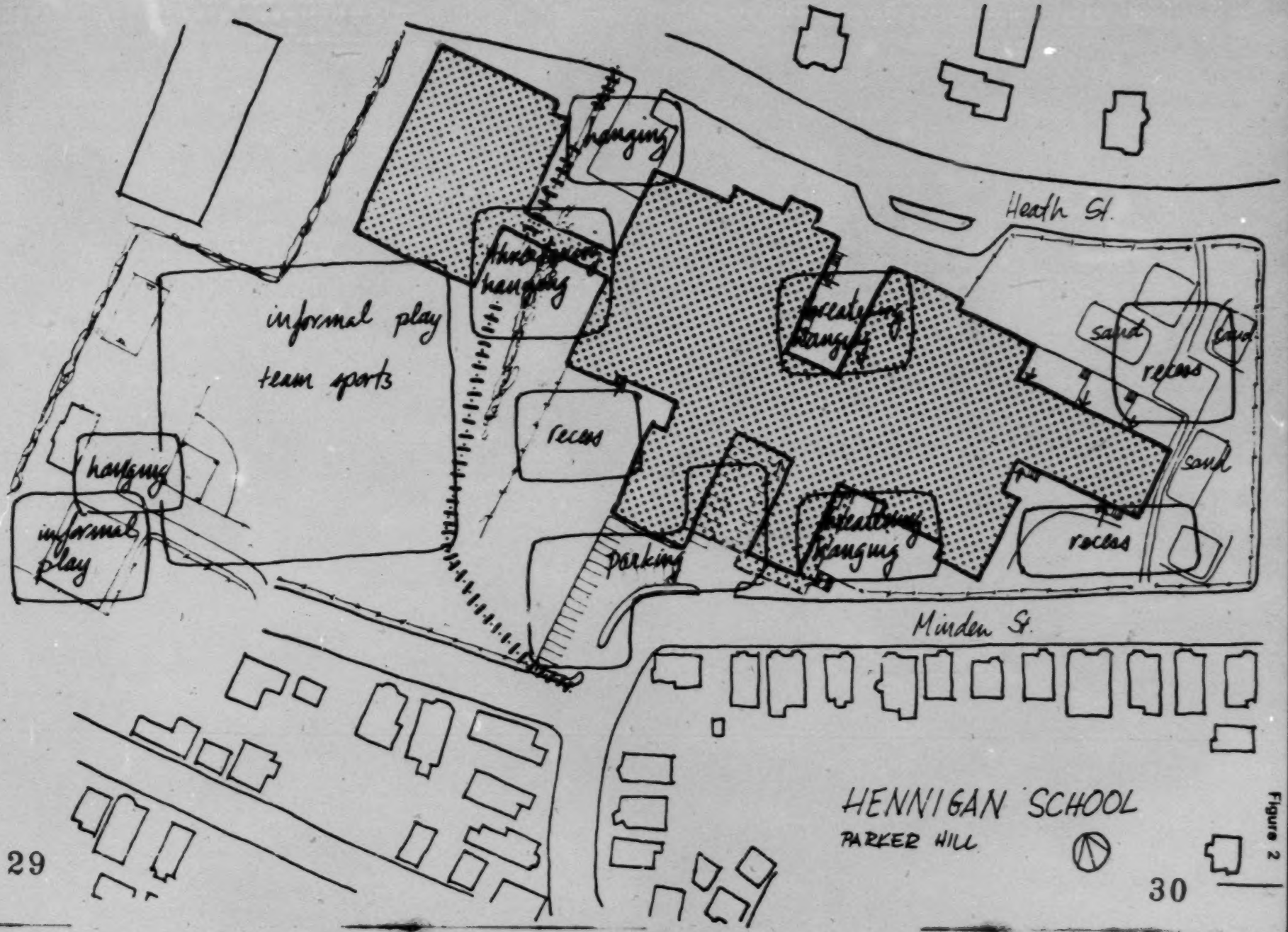
PARKING: The parking lot at the Hennigan is located close to the building and, in part, under the building, but damage and theft are such serious problems that a person is hired to watch over the parking lot from a second floor window. The darkness of the covered section of the parking lot may foster such problems, but otherwise the design would not seem particularly prone to crime.

CIRCULATION: The pass-through along the gully past the gym entrance is not as problematic as that at the Holland because there is better visibility and more activity, at least during the day.

MAINTENANCE: Many of the outdoor areas are forsaken; for example, the large sandbox which collects broken glass, dog feces, and washes down into other areas appears never to be cleaned. The hanging corners collect a lot of litter, but otherwise maintenance problems are not unusual.

VANDALISM: There is a great deal of difficulty with the doors, also, with access and damage to the roof, which had originally been designed with a playground. Part of the difficulty with the doors is their low visibility from the street--making them prone to being tampered with.

NO USE: The areas to the north and southeast of the school, intended for recess, are rarely used.



29

30

Figure 2

Holland School

RECESS:

The most valued recess area has been the basketball/tennis court behind the school. Up until recently, it was the only extended hard-top area. Unfortunately, it is distant from the school entrance and there have been conflicts with neighborhood people wanting to use the court. The new hard-top should improve the situation.

The areas in front are rarely used because of the level changes, rocks, paths, and trees which break up the space. When wet, the teachers will not use the areas because the dirt turns into mud.

TEAM SPORTS:

The only team sport area is the basketball court, which can be transformed into a tennis court if the community coordinator brings out the poles and nets. The baskets have sometimes been removed from the backboards. No playing area is large enough for a softball game.

INFORMAL PLAY:

Kids were rarely observed playing on the Holland open space. Occasionally, kids would pass through, but the only area used for games was the small parking lot to the east of the school. A small punchball field has been created using drain grids and some chalk markings for bases. The reason for the selection of this area is probably because it is readily visible and accessible from adjacent homes.

HANGING:
(non-threatening)

Only limited opportunities, but one location was along the sidewalk at the northeast corner of the site on Olney Street.

HANGING:
(threatening)

In contrast, there were many opportunities for this type of hanging: the gullies between building and embankment, the pass-through, the corners created

by the complex configuration at the rear of the building, and particularly the entranceways, which are sheltered (invisible) until one is right upon them.

PARKING: There were complaints that the parking was insufficient, and teachers feared for their cars and their personal security.

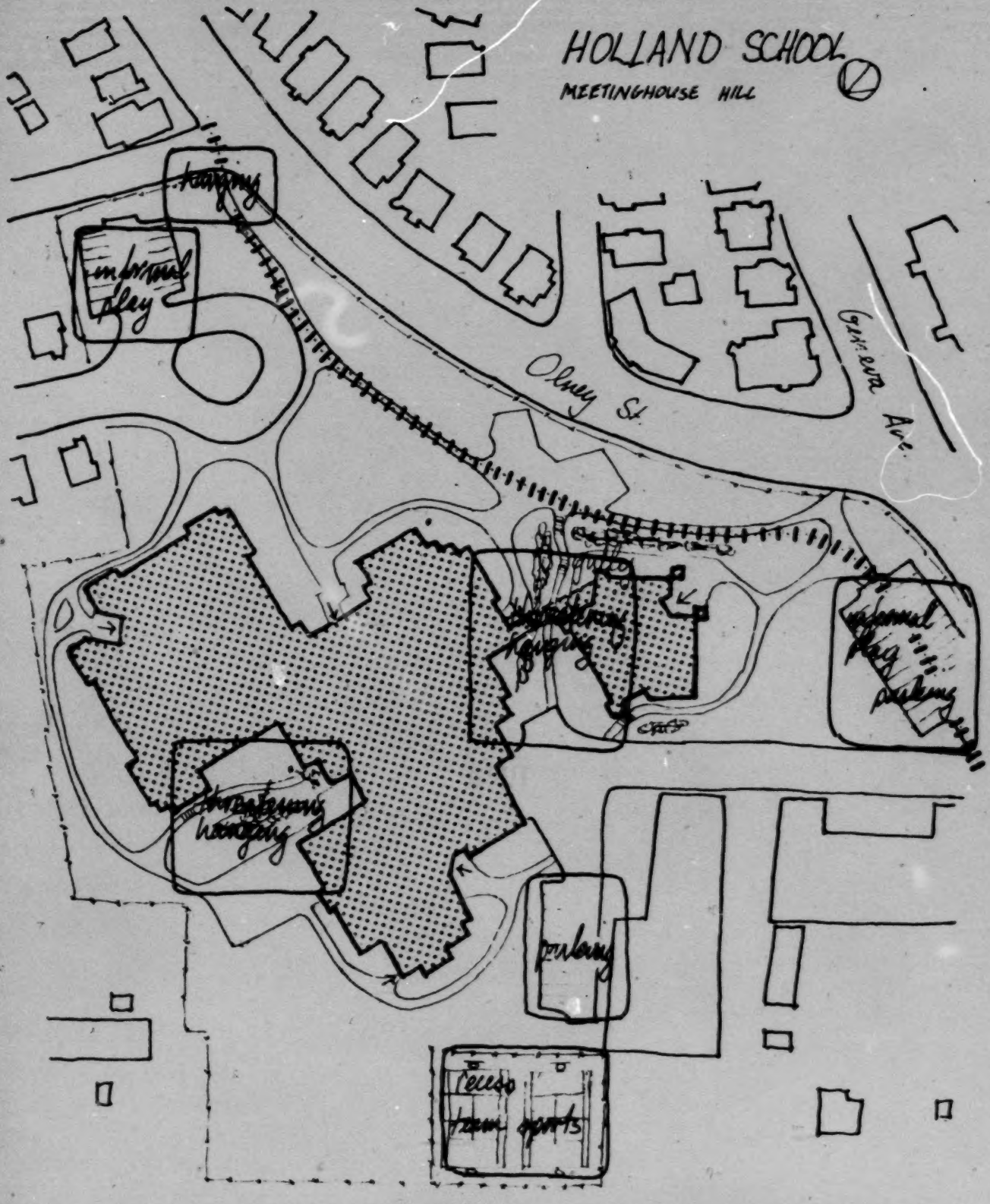
CIRCULATION: The gullies and pass-through are such a security problem that they are perceived of as being good circulation routes for criminals only.

MAINTENANCE: The custodian is frustrated by the continual crumbling of the pudding stone embankments, which provide an unlimited supply of projectiles. The main effort is to keep the hard-top usable.

VANDALISM: The Holland has just about given up trying to replace the lighting which has been completely destroyed repeatedly, so that many people will not come to the school at night. Attempts to put up lightweight fences to control movement in the front yard have only led to the destruction of the fences.

NO USE: The front yard seems rarely used, except by those who would vandalize it. The back yard, where the surfaces are more suitable for use, seems dominated by small groups of teenagers. The back yard is not visible from anything except industrial lots and the train tracks.

Figure 3



Kent School

RECESS:

The kindergarten teachers rarely use the open spaces intended for their classes, because they are too small and the sandboxes are filthy and filled with broken glass.

The older kids use the large area along Bunker Hill Street. Boys and girls are separated. The space is cramped. Sometimes the boys use the area to the side of the school; the high wall is a good "home run wall" for punchball.

The "pit" is not used much because shards of glass are embedded in the surface, and trash is hard to clear out of it. The pit-tunnel is off-limits, in any case.

Recess is sometimes cancelled, because the litter is so bad.

TEAM SPORTS:

There is not enough space for any team sports except basketball. Unfortunately, the baskets are too low and the court too sloped for tournaments. Nevertheless, the basketball court is about the only surface which is consistently free of glass, and the lights around the court are the only ones unbroken.

INFORMAL PLAY:

The spaces at the Kent seem to be best for informal play. Boys shoot hockey pucks into the corners of walls and windows, kids sit along the walls, and the basketball court is always crowded. Punchball and street hockey are played frequently; the irregular spaces do not cause a serious problem, especially for younger children. In fact, because the spaces are irregular, the younger kids don't have as much competition from the older kids, who prefer the larger and regulation-size facilities.

Very young children do not have many play opportunities; there is no totlot. However, several people

interviewed felt that a totlot would cause more trouble than it was worth, given the maintenance difficulties presently occurring.

HANGING: (non-threatening)

The Kent open space is a great meeting place for kids of all ages. Young kids will gather at the top of the stairs (along Tremont Street) and watch the action below, sometimes waiting until they have enough numbers to swoop down and take over the punchball area. Older kids hang by the basketball court and the community school entrance. Small groups were frequently seen sitting in the corners created by the kindergarten entrances.

HANGING: (threatening)

The niches created by the kindergarten entrances, the easily accessible roof, and other hidden areas behind the school offer ample opportunity for malicious activities. Bottles are tossed from the rooftop into the pit and generally all over the ground; also, occasionally at passers-by.

PARKING:

The parking lot behind the school is considered inadequate and unsafe by some teachers. A major problem is access from it to the school. Also, the lot is generally unobservable from the school--several teachers have had their cars stolen.

CIRCULATION:

Although it was intended that people be able to walk through from Bunker Hill Street to Tremont Street, older people will walk all the way around the block to avoid having to pass the teenagers hanging at the school.

MAINTENANCE:

Maintenance is a major difficulty. The custodians cannot keep ahead of the broken glass and litter. Some areas, such as the sprinkler pool and the hidden "A" area on the plan (Figure 4) have been written off as dumps and are not cleaned. The steps and grade changes make use of the automatic sweeping machine virtually impossible. Little ramps put in between levels alleviate this problem somewhat, but some areas must still be cleaned with a broom because of their size and shape.

The community coordinator fought to get trash barrels, but once she got them it was impossible to get them emptied. They function more like fireplaces than trash barrels, and probably create more damage than there would have been without them.

Programs to involve students in the maintenance have been received with little enthusiasm by the custodians. The kids supposedly don't help much, and the custodians did not feel that the program reduces litter or vandalism.

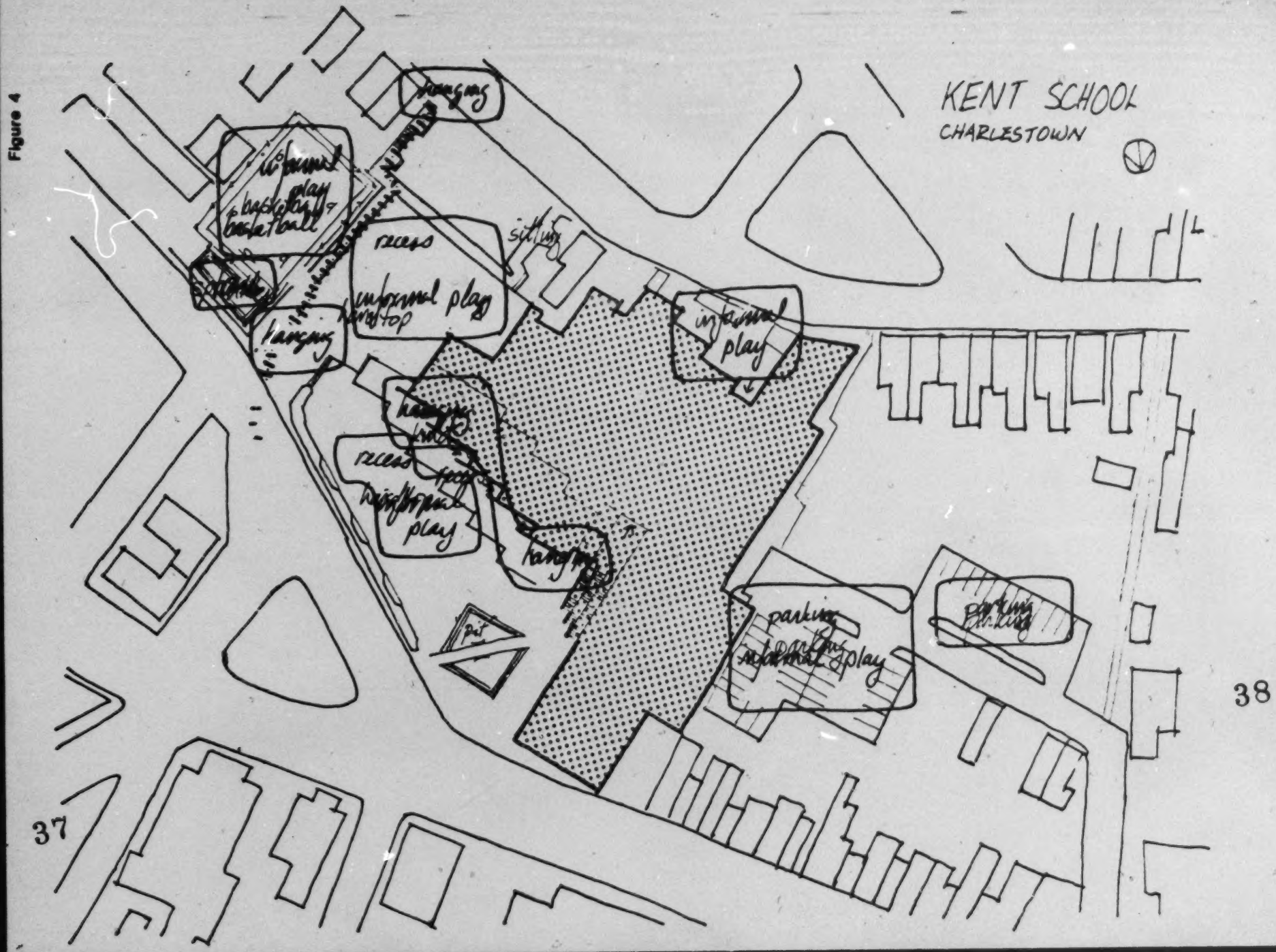
VANDALISM:

The Kent is one of the few schools where one can go and routinely observe vandalism. Breaking bottles or pulling branches off trees seem more like informal play than acts of premeditated destruction. All of the lights, except those over the basketball court, are broken. The explanation for the long life of the basketball court lights is clearly their value while working. Other lights are better broken, especially those by the kindergarten entrances which, once broken, make excellent hand and foot holds on the way to the roof.

NO USE:

Though the Kent open space is otherwise intensively used, the sprinkler pool is always full of debris. The pipes to the sprinkler were put in wrong and then broken, so the area usually serves no other function than as a dump.

Figure 4


KENT SCHOOL
CHARLESTOWN
informal play
basketball
recess
informal play
hangers
hangers
recess
informal play
hangers
pit
parking
informal play
parking
37
38

Lee School

RECESS:

The space provided for the elementary grades is much too small, yet the space for the kindergarten is disproportionately generous. Relocating the fence between the two could rectify part of the problem. The kindergarten area has several pieces of play equipment, most of which the teachers consider a hazard. The sandboxes are now three-foot holes with debris in the bottom.

The recess area used to open onto Franklin Field, but there were such problems with kids running off that a fence was installed. The area now works better for the teachers, but it is overcrowded.

Occasionally, some of the male teachers take their classes out to use the field, but women teachers are generally afraid to go out onto the field.

TEAM SPORTS:

Though Franklin Field is certainly adequate for many team sports, the field is not used much by the school or the community programs. The community coordinator felt he had all he could do to keep the indoor activities coordinated, given the lack of adequate supervision. They were trying to develop some outdoor activities. One problem was that the activities out on the field attracted a lot of people who would half participate and half disrupt.

There is no decent outdoor basketball court near the school. Franklin Field has a court, but the surface is cracked badly and the baskets have long since been ripped off the deteriorating backboards.

INFORMAL PLAY:

Virtually none was observed around the school, except an occasional kid wandering off the field, digressing to run across the totlot area.

HANGING:
(non-threatening)

There are usually several kids sitting around in front of the community school entrance and even more in the parking area. Generally, however, there is not much going on around the school, either for activity or for watching.

HANGING:
(threatening)

It was the community coordinator's rule of thumb that if kids were hanging out behind the school, there was trouble brewing. The hidden corners around the building and the ancient and crumbling bleachers at the edge of Franklin Field provide a supporting environment should the need arise.

MAINTENANCE:

There is often much broken glass in the parking area and some in the kindergarten area. However, compared to some of the schools this is a relatively minor problem here. In addition, the principal keeps a contingency fund (acquired by selling the children's art work) for making minor repairs. She prefers this to the agency red tape present in making a repair request.

CIRCULATION:

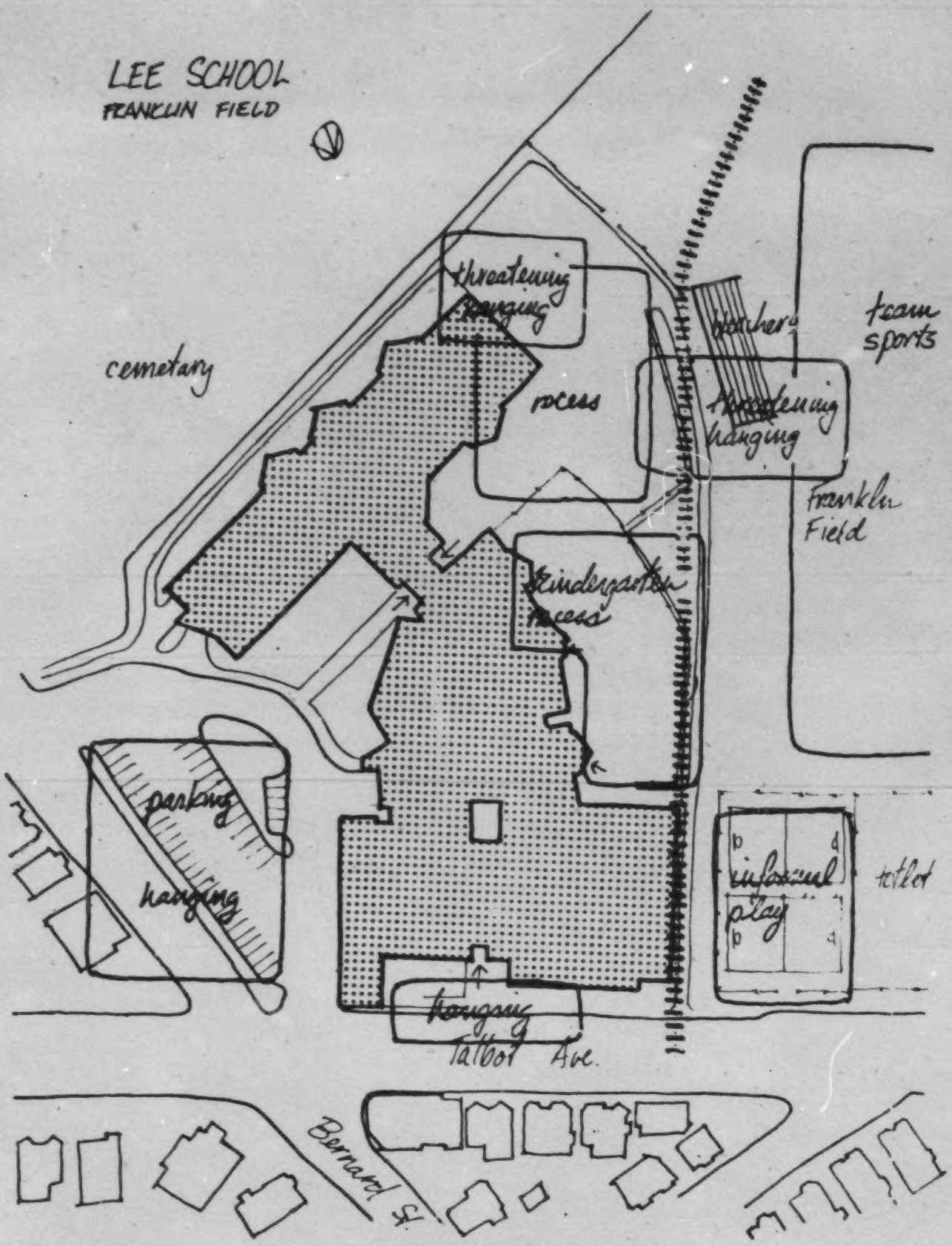
The fact that it is necessary to head down a path around to the back of the building to get to the play area probably accounts for much of its underutilization.

VANDALISM:

Destruction of property was not mentioned as a major problem, perhaps because the place is so infrequently used, but perhaps for other reasons (e.g., the relationship between the community program and the kids in the area). The community coordinator said that only a few things had been stolen from the community program and most had been recovered.

NO USE:

The back side of the school is rarely used, as mentioned above.


LEE SCHOOL
FRANKLIN FIELD
threatening hanging
recess
cemetary
teeters
team sports
threatening hanging
Franklin Field
kindergarten recess
parking
hanging
infantile play
toilet
hanging
Talbot Ave.
Bernard St.

Marshall School

RECESS:

The combination of spaces available at the Marshall School provide a good range of opportunities for recess. The totlot serves the kindergarten classes well. The basketball court works well for the older children. The bleachers and overlooking entrance area provide good promontories from which the teachers can watch over the children. The field is rarely used for recess, but occasionally in good weather, kids are allowed onto the near two-thirds of the field. (There is a rule against using the far third, because it disturbs one of the neighbors, who complains a lot).

TEAM SPORTS:

The field and the basketball court work well for a wide range of team sports, including softball, football, basketball and street hockey. Teenagers here have occasionally broken the basketball hoop or removed the backboards; they say this is in protest of the poor quality of this equipment. By forcing the city to replace the broken apparatus, they hope to receive better next time. Of the two basketball courts, the larger has regulation height baskets and is used much more frequently for games. The smaller court, with low baskets, is used more for street hockey. The coordinator thought that it was a good idea to have low baskets on one court for use by younger kids; however, we rarely observed anyone using the low baskets. The low baskets were heavily vandalized several times, perhaps because they were not usable.

INFORMAL PLAY:

The entire east side of the school works well for informal play. Even the parking lot on the south side is used extensively for street hockey. There are good opportunities for sitting and watching; also, for cruising between activities. The two streets are lined with residences, so that plenty of supervision from the neighbors is available.

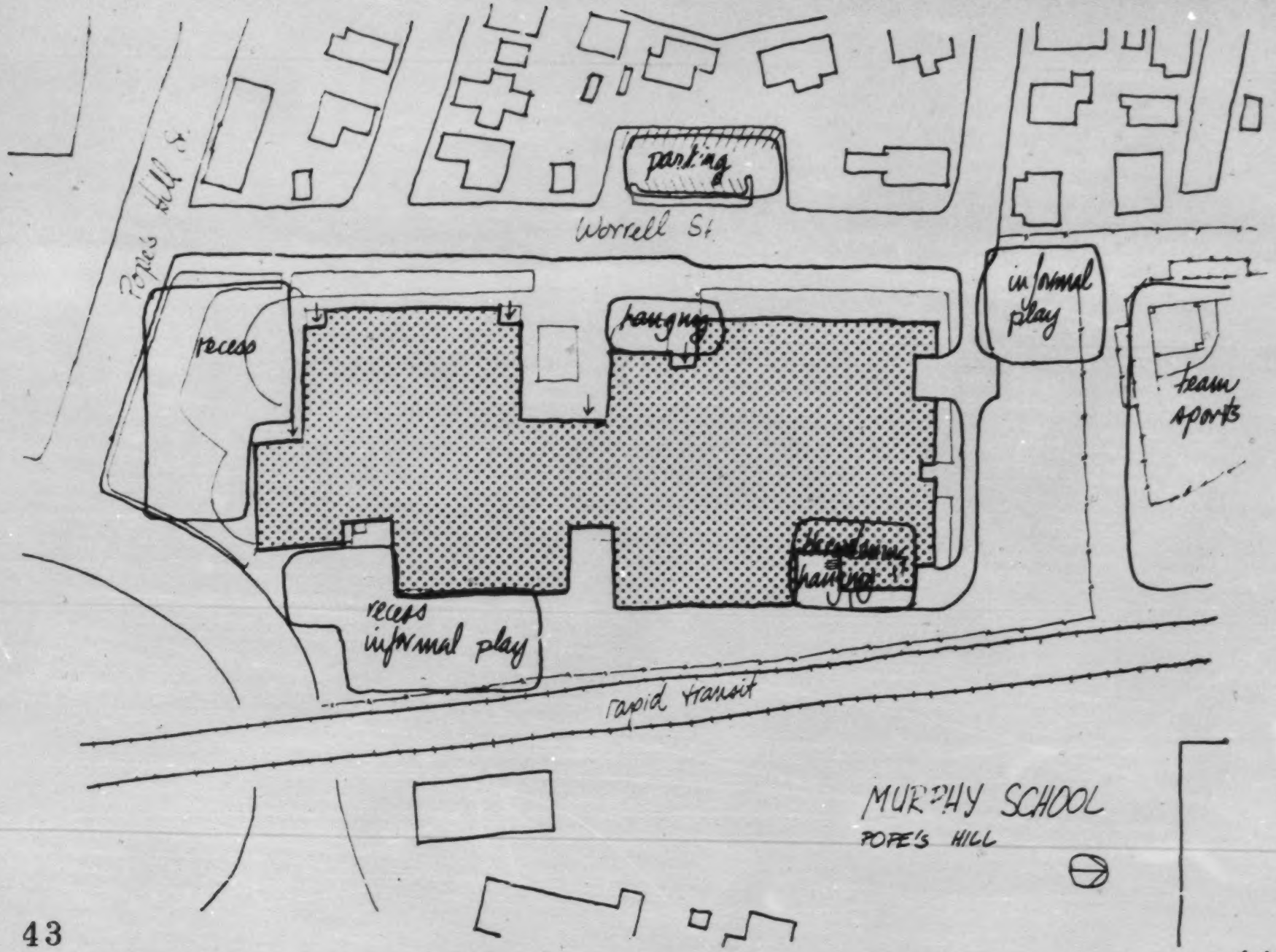

parking
Worrell St
Pope's Hill St
recess
hanging
informal play
team sports
recess
informal play
rapid transit
MURPHY SCHOOL
POPE'S HILL

Figure 7

HANGING:
(non-threatening)

There is a lot of hanging around, watching activities and waiting for friends. Particularly popular places are at the top of the bleachers by the community program entrance and at the northeast corner of the field, where there is a view out to an active residential street, as well as over the field.

HANGING:
(threatening)

There are also opportunities for more threatening hanging activities. There is a courtyard behind the school which reportedly has been used as a place to strip and abandon stolen automobiles. Corners around the entrance to the multi-purpose room support threatening hanging activity, too.

PARKING:

The south parking lot is rarely full during school hours, but the reason is not that the spaces are not needed; rather, because of muggings, teachers and staff tend to park on the grass by the service entrance.

CIRCULATION:

Circulation is particularly good on the south side of the school, because all the areas are connected by ramps. These are used frequently by kids on bicycles cruising between activities around the school and in the neighborhood. The fact that the main path between the two streets must pass a number of dark corners creates some difficulties at night. The field also serves as a major circulation route, making maintenance of the grass a little more difficult.

MAINTENANCE:

Though the maintenance of the outside is a frustrating chore for the custodian, the design presents no unusual maintenance problems. The custodian suggested hard-topping the remaining grass/dirt areas around the edge of the school, because they were so heavily travelled that no grass could grow and the dirt gets tracked into the building.

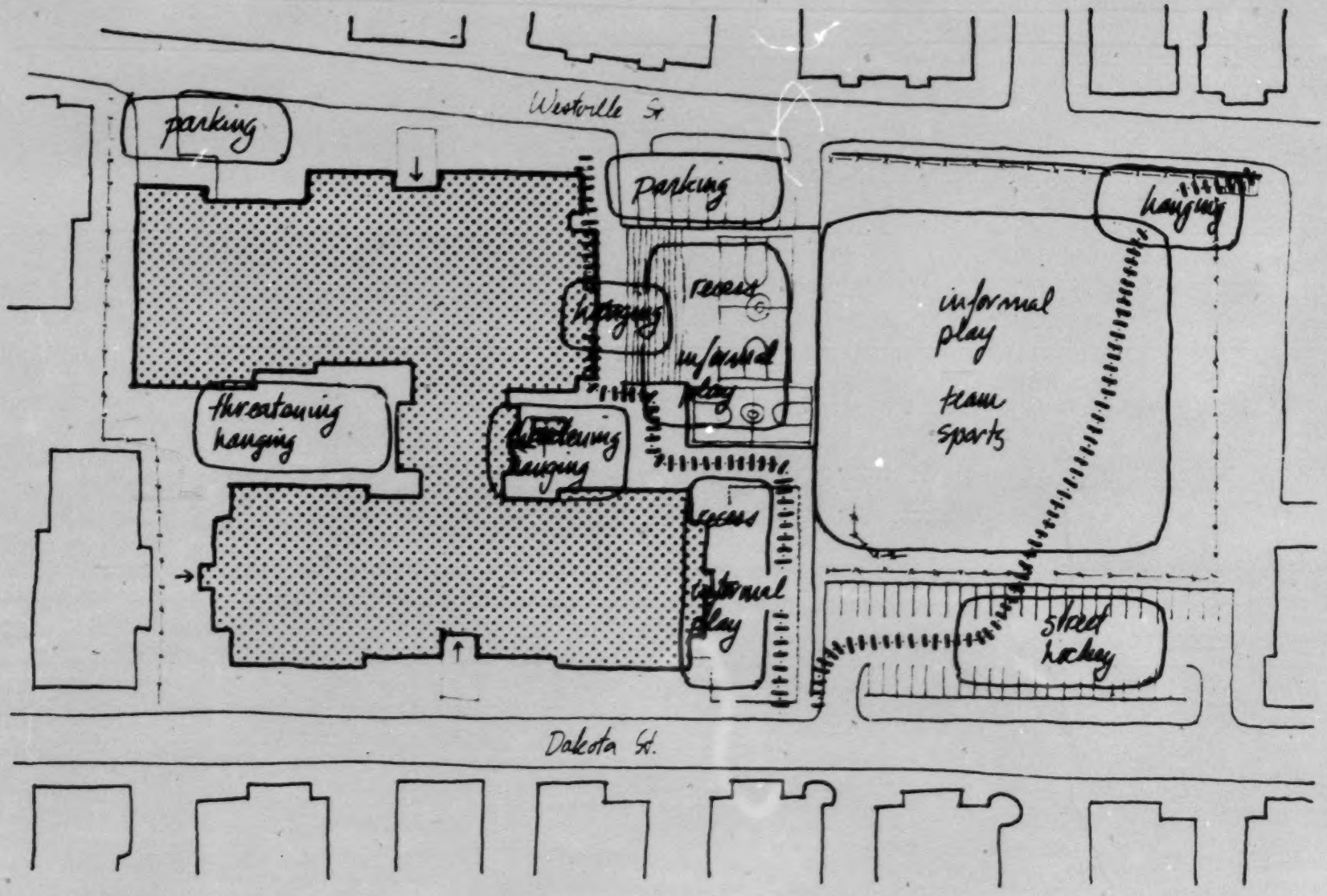
VANDALISM:

When the school first opened, there were many vandalism problems, including the theft of trees and turf. Over the years, the problem has subsided somewhat, perhaps because the novelty has worn off, per-

haps because an active community program was established. One particular problem mentioned by the custodian was the damage to roof-top equipment by kids who had climbed onto the roof.

NO USE:

The major unused area is the u-shaped courtyard behind the school. It is not used during school hours, because the activity is disturbing to the classes; it is not used after hours, because it is invisible from the street and palpably an unsafe area. The major reasons for going back there are to hang out, to set up a ladder to the roof, or to attempt illegal entry into the school.



MARSHALL SCHOOL
DORCHESTER

Figure 6

Murphy School

RECESS:

The recess area for the Murphy School is the small side yard to the south of the school. The area is too small for the number of kids who must use it. A kindergarten teacher found she could rarely take her kids out because they were overrun by older children. The immediate adjacency of Morissey Boulevard causes a good deal of concern, too. Sometimes things are thrown out onto the highway. Children have been known to trip over the semicircular curb in the recess area which is intended for sitting. Moreover, drainage in this area is poor and much of it is a "swimming pool" for several days after a rain. There were serious accidents on the heavy steel gates until they were removed.

When the school was first built, teachers tried taking their classes to the field for recess, but the distance proved too great.

They are hoping to black-top at least part of the area behind the school, making it usable in all weather.

TEAM SPORTS:

The field is big but is cut up by a Little League field; the more usable spaces are further from the school. When the school was built there was a big push to fix up the field. However, there have been conflicts and confusion between MDC and PRD over who would be responsible and who would pay. A Council member said that things were so bad at one point that one of the agencies had to come to the community group because it could not find any copies of its plans.

HANGING:

There is relatively little hanging around the Murphy and no reports of problems. The most common hanging area is right in front of the school by the Community Program entrance. There was evidence as well of groups hanging out by entranceways behind the school.

PARKING: The available lot is usually packed, but adequacy of the lot was not raised as a special problem.

MAINTENANCE: The layout of the grounds does not present special maintenance problems. There seems to be less litter around this school than others. Maintenance of the field is limited and largely beyond the control or influence of the school or community program staff. The custodians have tried to minimize this chore by refusing to unlock the toilet facilities located on the north side of the building.

VANDALISM: There were few complaints of vandalism, save some breaking in through the low windows.

CIRCULATION: The only circulation problem is in getting from the classrooms (at the south end of the building) to the usable areas of the field (the northern portion).

NO USE: The spaces behind the school are not used much because the ground is naturally soggy. However, this may change if part of the area is black-topped.

Design Recommendations

The quality of the open spaces at existing community schools is generally low: many of the functions supported by the environment are not those intended by the designers or PFD. At many schools, a large proportion of the users are probably people it had been hoped would not come around, and the condition of the new facilities has deteriorated rapidly.

Since so many of the problems encountered stem from a failure to provide usable spaces, it is worthwhile to examine the ten primary open space activities in terms of the characteristics of outdoor spaces which create or eliminate the opportunities for their occurrence. With the problem of limited available space and a lot of pressure to fit open space functions within minimal amounts of land, it is essential to understand how the environment can most effectively create the needed opportunities for open space activities. On the following pages, patterns in the effectiveness of the seven school open spaces are analyzed and criteria suggested for the ten activities.

Recess

Analysis

Hard-top surfacing is considered by principals, teachers and custodians as essential for recess. In addition, the patterns of informal play at times other than recess suggest that hard-top areas serve children's preferences as well. Such surfaces are easily maintained, allow for a wide variety of activities, and can be used under all weather conditions.

The staff at four of the seven schools studied complained that their hard-topped areas were too small and/or too oddly-shaped to be useful for recess purposes. Only at the Kent, Holland, and Marshall schools were the recess areas described as adequate in this respect.

Given a ratio of four teachers per 250 kids, most teachers find themselves unable to do more than spend their time keeping the number of accidents and disappearances at a minimum.* Supervision becomes their primary concern. The recess area must be totally and easily visible from several locations, and must be clearly delimited, not necessarily by insurmountable fences, but at least by demarcations which can be reference points. Sometimes substantial boundaries are needed: at the Lee School, a line between the recess area and Franklin Field did not prevent children from

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*As a means of control, rules and restrictions are often imposed. For example, at the Kent School boys and girls are separated for recess as this is felt by the principal to be most advantageous for each group and for control purposes. At the Marshall, students are allowed to go two-thirds of the way down the ballfield. They are not allowed access to the final third because of complaints raised by one neighbor. In order to avoid "trouble", the rule is made. This is not unusual for the School Department, which continually sets up limitations on schoolyard use, not to protect itself from legal battles--from which it is immune--but from the constant hassle of parental complaints.

cutting out to Franklin Field during recess--sometimes not returning to school. A three-foot fence was later added.*

The recess space must be located near the entrances to the classrooms. The PRD playgrounds are generally not used for recess because teachers find it impossible to bring children to and from the playground while still giving them an adequate playtime within twenty minutes. In addition, teachers feel more confident about getting speedy help in the case of an accident or an assault if they are in areas close to the building.** Even when recess areas are located close to the building, access is a key consideration, especially in the larger schools. If classrooms are located at the opposite side of the building from the play areas, classes will have to cross the entire length of the school to get there.

Several of the school open space layouts include special areas for the kindergarten classes. At the Murphy, where there were no such areas, a kindergarten teacher rarely took her class out because the available space was dominated by older kids. Special recess areas for kindergarten classes are recommended, but they must be sufficiently large to accommodate recess games. At the Kent and the Hennigan, the areas are too small to be used. An arrangement such as at the Marshall, where there is a separate totlot area for use by young children seems like the best arrangement, rather than dividing the scarce land into small spaces for each kindergarten.

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*As a rather innovative attempt at solving this problem, the designers of the Kent School provided a low, sloping wall between the area used for recess and Bunker Hill Avenue. While the area is a good one for sitting and playing on, it allows balls to easily stray into the busy street. Children then chase over the wall after them. Perhaps this would have been a more workable solution on a less heavily-trafficked street.

**Staff at both the Lee and Holland schools cited instances where colleagues had been assaulted or otherwise bothered when they had taken classes outside. These teachers felt more secure when closer to the building.

Probably the most successful recess environment is that at the Marshall. There are four distinct areas for different activities or groups: the tot-lot, which is used by the kindergarten classes (which generally come out one at a time to play); the basketball court, which is the main recess area and is easily supervised from the bleachers or the area above the bleachers; the area above the bleachers; and the field, which can be used on good days. (The back courtyard is never used for this purpose because the activity would interfere with the classes which look out on the space.) The spaces are all well-defined, supervisable, and easily accessible. The amount and types of equipment seem to work well.

The timberform equipment at the Agassiz School is very popular for recess use as well. Here, older classes, as well as the kindergarten, enjoy the equipment. However, teachers are generally concerned about equipment use for safety reasons.

The least successful recess provisions are probably those at the Hennigan School. The primary features, the gargantuan sandboxes, are unusable. The rest of the area is further chopped up by hard-top areas that are too small for most groups. The kindergarten sections, concrete platforms outside the kindergarten rooms, are too small for any real use. The PRD field is too distant and is often being used by other community groups.

Recess Recommendations

- The program should anticipate the numbers of children having recess at one time, as this will vary, depending on the total number of students at the school. However, in the event that this information is not given, present practices indicate that the designer should anticipate about 200-250 children to be let out for recess at one time. Since many of these children "run wild" at this time, the area must accommodate a large, moving crowd, both safely and comfortably.

- Recess areas must be easily supervisable. They must be totally visible from several locations in the recess area; hidden corners should be avoided.

- Boundary demarcations are also useful for supervision purposes. This might be a low wall, a fence, steps, or a level change. This boundary should not be insurmountable, but it should also not be too easily surmounted.

- Recess areas should not be combined with physical education areas as recess occurs throughout the day, thereby preempting physical education uses. The regulation-sized fields and courts used by the community program in the evenings could be used for physical education classes by the school during the day. This will only be successful, however, if the administrative issue is resolved of who is entitled to use the space when.

- Recess facilities should be located immediately adjacent to the school building, and readily accessible from classroom areas.

- Hard-top is the most preferred ground surface for recess areas.

- The practice of providing separate outdoor areas for younger children (e.g., totlots and/or kindergarten areas) is a good one. However, these spaces should not merely be "patios" attached to the classroom; they must be sufficiently large to allow several classes of very active children to play at one time.

Team Sports

Analysis

The adequacy of the open space for accommodating team sports can be generalized into the question of whether the space meets the regulation standards for specific popular activities. We have found that, in most cases, standards have not been met. Spaces which deviate in size, shape and/or equipment from regulation requirements end up being used only for more informal pick-up games, if at all. The inability to play "real" games in these areas diminishes the value of the facilities. The importance to the community of these regulation spaces cannot be overemphasized. If provided, the community programs can prepare for and hold tournament games on their own grounds, an activity which seems to be of importance to almost all programs. Under the current circumstances, several programs must bus their teams to other facilities for practises and games.

The team sports we found to be currently popular in all neighborhoods are basketball, hockey and, in the summer, baseball and softball. However, most of the schools studied were inadequately equipped for any of these sports. Basketball courts around the community schools are in surprisingly poor condition. The courts are either too small, markedly sloped, or are equipped with poor quality, broken-down backboards and baskets which are not at the proper height.

The Marshall School sets an example of what is both good and bad in basketball court design. On the good side, there is a regulation-sized court (complete with lines painted by the community program), and a fine set of bleachers providing a sitting area and a boundary/buffer between the courts and the rest of the open space. On the other hand, there is also a smaller court with low baskets intended for but almost never used by younger kids (as one seven-year old said, "That court's just for babies."). Being unusable for teenagers, this area is trashed and damaged. When the court is in a usable state, it is frequently used for other-than-basketball purposes: e.g., for street

hockey. The utility of this non-regulation, alternative court for basketball practise seems, from all the evidence, to be dubious, at best.

It is difficult to assess the use of playing fields. For much of the year, those schools with access to fields seem to make little use of them, primarily due to the fact that the budget for all physical education instructors has been cut. The school programs at the Marshall and the Agassiz do occasionally use the fields in spring and fall for recess. At the other schools, where fields are nearby, they are generally not considered to be near enough to use very often. Greater demand is placed on the fields during the summer months; however, even then many of the schools do not get to use the fields very often if they belong to the PRD. League game scheduling only allows the community programs access to the field for a small proportion of the day. Several community coordinators felt they would like to use the fields beyond the summertime, but PRD only maintains its fields during that season.

Perhaps the best playing field is that at the Agassiz. The field is a good size and is very well enclosed. The fence is well-designed, allowing easy access to the field, but containing stray balls. Other admirable features here are the sitting areas just outside the fence and along the street, the bleachers, and the lighting.

The location of facilities suitable for team sports is also critical as conflicts have arisen over the proximity of play facilities to adjacent residences. Team sports attract a good number of both participants and onlookers; sometimes this continues late into the night. Unfortunate neighbors overlooking these areas (e.g., at the Kent School) are annoyed by the noise accompanying the games.

Team Sports Recommendations

- It is essential that any team sport facility meet regulation standards regarding size, shape, and orientation. Equipment must be sturdy and meet regulation standards.

- Currently, basketball, street hockey and baseball or softball in the summer are the most popular sports throughout the city. However, the designer must investigate the neighborhood surrounding the school to determine the sports which are popular there.

- Several games having similar large space requirements (e.g., football, soccer, track, field hockey) can be laid out in a single area, with boundary demarcations in evidence for each. This would allow for maximum activity opportunities in a single space.

- For some sports (e.g., hockey), portable equipment is preferable. Steps should be taken to ensure that the community and school programs receive the equipment.

- Ballfields and basketball courts should be enclosed. Since ballfields frequently serve as circulation routes between streets, the enclosure must be one which will allow for easy access as well as keeping balls contained within (e.g., see Agassiz School solution).

- Sitting areas should be provided near team sport facilities. In many cases, bleachers built into a slope have been an excellent solution as they provide adequate seating as well as a barrier to keep stray balls away from the building and out of other play areas.

- Team sport areas should be lit at night. Lighting should be of the tall, floodlight variety.

- Team sport areas should be located away from any adjacent residences.

Informal Play

Analysis

Environments to support informal play need not be as contained as recess areas, but they cannot merely be leftover spaces. Well-defined areas are actively used and take on a significance for the users which reflects both the physical and activity aspects of the space: e.g., in several instances, we heard kids talk about the "punchball area" or the "hockey area", although these could not be identified as such by physical features alone. There are some physical requirements which are essential to consider in designing for informal play activities.

Visibility from nearby residences or street life is an important requirement for these areas. Visibility links the play area to other neighborhood activity, attracts more people to the activity, and assures emergency aid if needed. Whether the space is visible or not will, in part, determine whether it is used primarily for play or primarily for threatening hanging-out purposes. The spaces ideally should be observable from the community program's headquarters as well as from neighboring residences and streets. Because of understaffing, informal play spaces are rarely used by the community programs unless they can be supervised from inside the building.

The spaces themselves must be large enough to do more than sit in. While they need not be regulation size and shape like spaces for team sports, they should be of sufficient size and shape to permit informal group games (e.g., punchball) and smaller practise activities (e.g., hockey practise). It is difficult to anticipate all the complexities of informal play. Much of this involves the kinds of games mentioned above; but equally important aspects of informal play are the accompanying social activities of hanging-out and circulating from one activity space to another (see relevant sections below). These latter activities require strong visual and/or physical interconnections between informal play spaces themselves, and between these smaller spaces and larger

team sport areas. In addition, features of the spaces themselves, such as benches and low walls--particularly sloping walls such as that at the Kent School--can serve a dual purpose as both play equipment and social sitting areas.

The issue of whether or not the presence of equipment--and the single purpose that this often implies--enhances or detracts from the usability of a space is open to question, since we had few examples from which to judge. It is clear, however, that equipment often presents a real maintenance problem. Some equipment seems almost impossible to maintain; this is particularly true of sandboxes, which, in the city at least, become receptacles for broken glass, cans and animal excrement. Given the present custodial workload, we question whether the effort required to maintain sandboxes (and the disasterous results when they are not maintained) can be compensated for by the pleasure derived from playing in them.* In other instances, kids often destroy equipment not perceived of as useful to them, either because it is something they would never use (e.g., a totlot as viewed by teenagers), or because it is in useless condition (e.g., basketball backboards which are too low or too flimsy to withstand a real game.**) Also, much destruction is done for sheer fun.

However, it seems clear that equipment valued for its usefulness will not be as readily destroyed. Even so, sturdy equipment that is able to stand abuse is essential. One is forced to conclude that a "poorly equipped" area (i.e., where equipment is damaged or removed) is probably worse than no equip-

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*A common custodial response to this is simply to remove the troublesome equipment. For example, it is not uncommon to find sandboxes hard-topped over. At the Marshall School, the swing-frame stands without swings, the custodian having removed them to alleviate the problem of taking them off every evening to prevent their destruction.

**At the Marshall School, teenagers reported destroying such backboards at least in part to point up these unsatisfactory qualities.

ment at all, as the former reflects an attitude of neglect which often spreads epidemically to the rest of the open space.

Unequipped areas can be designed to accommodate portable equipment. For example, an area that permits street hockey games would be valuable in most neighborhoods of Boston, with kids bringing their own equipment or having it provided by the community programs.

The most versatile and easily maintained ground surfacing for informal play purposes is hard-top, with the one exception being in totlot areas. Here, a softer surface is favored; in cases where hard surfacing has been used (e.g., the Lee School), teachers complain about children falling and hurting themselves.

Finally, we are doubtful of the utility of seasonal informal play spaces. At the Kent School, the spray pool is occasionally used for several months during the summer;* for the rest of the year, it stands useless and full of litter. The custodian knows it won't be used, and doesn't bother to clean it. Had this activity been combined with an activity space less popular in the summer months (e.g., a hockey court), the usefulness of the area could have been extended to the entire year.

Informal Play Recommendations

- Informal play areas should be visible from surrounding streets and residences. If possible, they should also be visible from the school's community areas so that outdoor activities can be supervised from inside.
- Spaces should be level and should be large enough to permit informal group games (e.g., punchball) and smaller practise activities (e.g., hockey practise).

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*It is used not without difficulty, however. The skid-proof, rough surfacing of the pool collects glass bits which are impossible to remove. A plastic lining has had to be placed over this surface for safety reasons.

- Equipment:
  - Assume equipment will receive both hard use and abuse. Also assume that custodians would rather remove troublesome equipment than maintain it.
  - Avoid equipment that cannot be maintained easily, or which is useless or dangerous in an unmaintained state. A good example of this is sandboxes. Is sand play worth the effort needed to keep the boxes clean?
  - Use only top quality equipment. In the end, this is cheaper to use, due to savings on replacements. This includes not only the equipment itself, but also the way it is assembled.
  - Play equipment should not be avoided as a liability and potential troublespot. In those schools which have it, the play equipment is heavily used and appreciated by the younger children. At the same time, it must be sturdy and able to withstand abuse from both tots and older children.
  - Do not overequip the open space; only provide equipment whose use can be clearly anticipated, and place this in areas where use will be enhanced (considering size of space, shape of space, etc.). Only useful equipment stands the chance of remaining undamaged. No equipment at all is better, therefore, than unused equipment.
- Ground Surfaces:
  - Hard-top is the most preferred ground surface for all activities other than totlots and those for which a field is a must (e.g., baseball, track, football, soccer).
  - Softer surfaces (e.g., woodchips) should be used in totlot areas. Grass is not an acceptable solution, as it gets worn away quickly. The surface material must be easy to clean. If light materials like woodchips are used, periodic replacement costs must be considered.
  - Avoid rubberized surfaces. They are difficult to clean (they soften in warm weather and broken glass becomes embedded in them), and can be cut and otherwise damaged relatively easily.

- Provide sitting areas near informal play areas.

- Some of the informal play spaces might be located adjacent to team sport areas in order to maximize the "people-watching" function of the open space. However, clear separations between the areas must be provided to avoid activity conflicts.

- Avoid facilities that can be used only on a single-season basis (e.g., spray pool areas). Incorporate such activities into spaces which can alternate use with the changing seasons: e.g., a spray nozzle in a hockey area where hockey is not played in the summer months.

Hanging (non-threatening)

Analysis

Though hanging-out is commonly conceived of as an illicitly inspired, anti-establishment activity, much of it is best understood as an extension of informal play. The opportunity to meet friends and find out what's happening draws as many kids as a game itself. School open space can be an important place where kids can gather without invading the territory of shopkeepers or parents.

This type of hanging develops around centers of activity such as a basketball game, community school entrance, or street life. It is inextricably tied to these activities. Onlookers will watch a game, possibly waiting their turn, and players will take breaks to rest or talk with friends.

An area which works well in this regard is the bleachers at the Marshall School. They are located between the community program entrance and the basketball courts, and there is a good view across the playing fields and onto the streets. A natural separation, particularly a rise in elevation, between the activity and the hanging area creates a very desirable meeting space. This is true in the case of the bleachers at the Marshall School and also in the hanging area along Tremont Street at the Kent School which overlooks the activities below.

Visual connections to the street and surrounding neighborhood are also important. If the area is visible from residences and the street, it is less likely that threatening activities will take place. Also, if passers-by can see that the hanging is clearly related to the activity it is less likely to be perceived as a threat.

To support non-threatening hanging, a place should be linked both to activities and to the surrounding neighborhood. These factors appear most crucial in differentiating areas which support non-threatening hanging from areas supporting threatening

hanging. One of the best illustrations of this is the area by the entrance to the gym and pool at the Hennigan School. This area supports both types of hanging: During the day, when the community program is going strong, there is a natural gathering on the bank running from the street to the entrance. At night, the place is dead except for the occasional glow from cigarettes or 'joints'.

Hanging (non-threatening) Recommendations

- Create sitting areas (not necessarily benches) around heavily used spaces, in full view of neighboring residences and other street life.
- Utilize changes in elevation to create overlooks from which to observe ongoing activities. Keep in mind that these areas must be easily maintainable.
- Anticipate hanging around focal points such as community school entrances. These focal points should be visible from the neighborhood, and sheltered sitting areas might be provided.

Hanging (threatening)

Analysis

There are areas around most schools which support a form of hanging which people tend to perceive as threatening. Not only do the elderly avoid these areas, they are rarely used by children.

The kinds of spaces which support threatening hanging activities are the back sides and hidden corners of school buildings. Typically, there is limited visibility into these areas, though there may be good visibility to the outside. Roof-tops, for example, create invisible lookouts. Classic examples include the rear courtyard at the Marshall School and the Agassiz School. At the Marshall, stolen cars have been stripped in this space. At the Agassiz, they have replaced the plexiglass in the doors with steel sheets, because kids have burned through the plexiglass and broken in.

Major recreation areas at several schools have gone unused because the spaces have been more supportive to a few teenagers than to neighborhood kids in general. The Lee and Holland playgrounds are located behind the schools and are invisible from neighboring residences or the street.

Unfortunately, several site plans have created these areas along circulation paths leading to the rear of the school. For example, the pass-throughs at the Holland School from the front to the back creates several niches that are frequented by threatening teenagers. As a result, not only the path but the space behind is less usable.

Factors other than visibility from the street, particularly the location of community program activities, will affect the use of a space; some spaces will be safe and popular while community program activities are taking place, but threatening otherwise. The Holland and Hennigan community programs generate activity in otherwise all-but-deserted areas.

To be sure, other factors influence the tendency for teenage kids to strip stolen cars, break and enter, or smoke dope around school. Several community coordinators noticed that the availability of programs reduced troubles with gangs of kids. At one school, a new coordinator reduced hanging-out by consistently evicting kids. But these were vivid instances in which the design of the open space certainly went a long way towards creating the opportunity for threatening hanging activities.

Hanging (threatening) Recommendations

- To reduce the opportunity for threatening hanging activity, minimize hidden corners and courtyards which are not visible from surrounding residences or the street.
- In particular, avoid hidden corners along circulation paths to play areas, because this may reduce the usability of the playing area as well as of the circulation path.
- In areas where it is anticipated that this type of hanging might occur, make sure that the interior of the school is inaccessible (i.e., avoid windows, doors, vents, etc.).

Parking

Analysis

Teachers at most schools voiced concern that parking lots were not safe places, for them personally or for their cars. At several schools, there were reports of assaults and car thefts. Problems have developed in many neighborhoods when the parking lot has been too distant or not in an open, visible location. At the Marshall School, teachers and staff park on the grass and sidewalk rather than in the far lot. At the Kent School, the lot is set in a back alley, accessible only through the service entrance or a narrow path along the side of the building. The community council at the Agassiz noted that their parking lot was a lot safer after a deteriorating barn alongside the lot, formerly used for hanging out in, was torn down and lights were installed.

The capacity of the lot is also a problem at most schools. Not only do teachers complain, but community councils said that people won't come to meetings at night because there is inadequate parking.

Another consideration in designing parking lots is that they are often used after-hours as play areas for street hockey, punchball or other games. Sometimes, kids have even painted markings on the lots for games; for example, at the Kent and the Holland schools. Parking lots should be designed with this use in mind.

Parking Recommendations

- Parking lots should be near the school and visible from the school offices and neighboring residences to reduce the chances of assault and theft.
- Provide adequate parking space, not only for teachers but for evening meetings.

- Design parking lots to accommodate informal play (see recommendations under informal play, hanging, and circulation).

- Provide sturdy lighting of parking lot areas and of paths connecting parking areas to community entrances.

Circulation

Analysis

Usable, attractive, and safe circulation routes around schools are essential. Without good circulation, play areas are less usable, being more difficult to get to. But circulation can be a lot more than a safe way to get to an activity; it can be an important activity in its own right. The various hanging and activity areas at the Marshall School are connected by sidewalks and ramps, along which kids cruise from group to group checking up on what has been happening and passing the word. Also, there is a lot of bike and motorbike riding as an end in itself. The opportunity for bike, motorbike, and go-cart riding can be created by linking areas with ramps instead of steps, and by cutting curbs.

For all circulation, on bike or on foot, the route must be open and visible. Hidden corners generate fears for, if not actual risks to, personal security.

If a route is intended for use by the elderly, it should be especially non-threatening--avoiding heavy activity or hanging areas. At the Kent School, older people will walk around the block rather than through the open space.

Finally, many circulation problems stem from improper location of spaces. At the schools sited next to parks, the playing fields were too distant from the classrooms for use during recess. Parking lots are unused because they are accessible only through long or unsafe circulation paths.

Circulation Recommendations

- Design circulation as an activity for kids. Eliminate architectural barriers to bicycles so that kids can cruise from one activity to another.

- Circulation paths must be safe: visible and open. Avoid hidden corners adjacent to pathways. For elderly persons, circulation paths must go around rather than through activities, and should particularly avoid hanging areas.

- Minimize the need for circulation areas by placing needed activity spaces in easily-accessible areas--e.g., play facilities might be located in front of the school, rather than behind it.

- Provide inaccessible, sturdy lighting along all circulation paths.

Maintenance

Analysis

This is a major component of open space usability: spaces which are poorly maintained are virtually useless. With the lack of attention generally given by custodians to outside areas, a designer must assume the worst with regard to maintenance issues. Outdoor spaces must be easy to care for, with a minimum of effort. All of the schools studied had difficulty maintaining their open space areas, but the most difficult areas to maintain were those which were small, oddly-shaped, and on different levels. A prime example of this is the Kent School. Here, the custodian has a machine for picking up litter; however, it will not fit into many of the spaces, nor can it go between the different levels. Therefore, much of the total area must be swept by hand--a time-consuming job at the Kent School.

Under the issue of maintenance, several words should also be said about lighting. This is a difficult question, because it embodies a conflict between two user groups--the teenagers, who generally prefer to hang around the school in the dark, and have great fun taking pot shots at the lights; and the community adults, who are afraid to park at and approach an unlit school where people might be lurking in the dark. Several community representatives have complained about this, yet most of the schools observed had few lights in working condition. We did note, however, that in areas used by teenagers at night and for which light was needed (e.g., basketball courts), these were, indeed, working. In addition, some of the taller floodlights installed at a few schools (e.g., on the basketball court of the Kent School) seem to be more difficult to destroy.

Maintenance Recommendations

- Assume the worst: custodians will probably not spend much time maintaining outdoor open space. These areas must, therefore, be maintainable with a minimum of effort.
- Avoid small, irregularly-shaped areas that are difficult to get cleaning machines into.
- Avoid multi-level areas, including many steps. If different levels are specified, provide easy means of access for cleaning equipment.
- Do not specify equipment that is easy to litter and difficult to clean: e.g., sandboxes.
- Avoid large unprogrammed spaces, particularly in areas that are not easily visible from the street. These will most likely be used for hanging out in and will collect a lot of litter.
- Try to anticipate other areas where hanging will probably occur. These should be accessible for easy cleaning (i.e., few corners, few level changes, hard-topped).
- Avoid large grassed areas in heavily-used/heavily-littered locations such as totlot areas, areas surrounding basketball courts, hanging niches.
- Avoid small grass areas in heavily-used locations: adjacent to pathways and basketball courts, or in line-up or recess areas. If used at all near pathways, grass areas might be raised above path level, or the pathways should be wide enough for 4-5 kids to walk along at one time.
- Low shrubbery beds which serve only to collect garbage should be avoided. If shrubbery is desired, it should be very thickly planted (so that rubbish cannot blow inside), cover the entire planter bed (so that younger children are not tempted to dig up the exposed earth), and be hearty and coarse enough to discourage trampling

through. Thorny shrubs are a dubious solution because of the possibility of accidents (e.g., children falling onto the shrub), and the impossibility of cleaning among them, if necessary.

- Avoid siting trees in heavily-used locations (e.g., next to basketball courts and informal play areas), or in other very active location. In other areas, plant sizeable trees--at least five-inch caliper--and provide sturdy protection for them (i.e., use durable staking materials such as metal).

- Do not finish landscaping after the school has opened. Studies have shown that significantly less damage occurs in landscapes completed before project completion than in those finished after the project has been occupied.

- Maintain ballfields on a year-round basis, not only during the summer.

- Lighting:

  - The school and its open space areas should be lit at night with inaccessibly tall, sturdy floodlights. Smaller, less sturdy varieties generally popular in newer schools (e.g., globe lights) are easily destroyed, in spite of manufacturers' claims.

  - Special attention must be given to lighting parking areas, circulation paths, entrances, and facilities which can be used at night (e.g., basketball courts and ballfields).

  - Make sure there are no dark corners, particularly near pathways. Avoid trying to light a corner by itself--those wishing to hide there will find some way to eliminate the light source. Corners should be shallow enough so that they can be lit by the floodlights used to light the open space, in general. Tunnels should be avoided.

Vandalism

Analysis

Property destruction is a serious problem around most of the community schools, though, as noted by John Zeisel,* much of it is a result of normal use rather than malicious forethought. Some of that which is intentional destruction is a reflection of attitudes towards the institution and may not be easily deterred.** But a space which is less valuable for recreation is more likely to be vandalized. A common pattern is that lighting fixtures at a school will be broken everywhere except over the basketball court. At the Marshall School, it is the low baskets, not the regulation baskets which have been torn down. At the Kent, broken bottles and other wreckage accumulate primarily in the least usable of all spaces—the sprinkler pool.

Some vandalism and trashing appears to be associated with threatening hanging. Rear entries which make good threatening-hanging areas are often the point at which kids will break into the school. Doors are frequently vandalized, perhaps for their symbolic value, perhaps as the first step in stealing from the school.

While heavy anger against the school as an institution may be the motivation for some of the intentional destruction, much of it is more light-hearted. A kid whipping a sapling tree back and forth until it breaks or carefully selecting bottles out of a trash barrel and pitching them at a target, often appears to be "playing", in every sense of the word. There is no look of guilt, or hesitation to continue if seen by

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*Zeisel, John. "Designing Schools to Minimize Damage from Vandalism and Rough Play," Schoolhouse, Vol. 15, Educational Facilities Laboratory, Inc., 1974.

**In such instances, the war is only escalated by heightening security measures. Bubble gum and lighter fluid (or a blow torch) have more or less the same effect on plexiglass as a rock has on glass.

adults passing by. The only way to end that kind of damage would be to provide something more exciting to do.

Where vandalism is a statement of anger against the system, the designer may be able to contribute by creating an environment that supports the person's needs, but it may be that the system must change in some other way. Several of the community coordinators felt they were able to reduce vandalism and related problems by offering good programs.

Vandalism Recommendations

To minimize vandalism:

- Avoid spaces which have no clearly useful purpose.
- Follow recommendations to reduce opportunities for threatening hanging (see section above).
- Create enough opportunities for other forms of play so that busting up the place won't be the only exciting thing to do.

No Use

Analysis

Given the scarcity of open space areas in the city, perhaps more distressing than vandalism is no use at all. Nevertheless, significant amounts of the open spaces around the community schools just are not used.

Two factors are commonly involved in discouraging any use. One is that the area is not safe to be in. Because it is invisible from the neighborhood or because the path to get there is a hang-out for muggers, kids rarely used several otherwise suitable spaces (the court and field behind the Holland, for instance).

A second factor is that the space is not shaped suitably for any games. The open space around the Hennigan is not level and is chopped up by small hard-top areas and giant sandboxes. A very common problem is that buildings are designed and sited in ways which create small, hidden, unusable spaces. Complex forms may create a pleasing sight, but do little for the kid looking for a place to play. Small spaces may be particularly valuable, if linked to other activities. For example, the kindergarten areas at the Kent (though useless for kindergarten recess) are good sitting areas for kids watching other informal play.

Less commonly, but occasionally, areas are not used because there are rules against it. At the Marshall, teachers do not take classes out into the back courtyard because it disturbs other classes, and they do not let kids use the far third of the playing field because it disturbs a neighbor.

No Use Recommendations

To avoid areas that discourage use:

- Open space areas should be adequate to support desired activities such as informal play. Small spaces may be

quite suitable if linked to larger patterns of activities.

- Play areas should be visible from residences, community program offices, and street life.

- Avoid designs which set up conflicts between open space activities and others, such as classrooms. Rules may be established forbidding use.

Chapter Three

SCHOOLS NEXT TO PARKS

One of the major decisions in locating a school and planning the open space is whether to locate the school on its own self-sufficient site or locate it on a site adjacent to an existing playground or park. Ostensibly a mere economy of space, the decision to locate next to a park and to rely upon the park for school open space functions has several important implications. In this section, the differences between these two kinds of open space arrangements will be examined, with recommendations made regarding future open space policy.

Policy Impetus

While the practice of putting schools adjacent to existing park and/or playground facilities is relatively recent, it has had a significant impact on the open space policy for community schools, with about half of Boston's elementary community schools having been located in this way. Of the seven schools observed in this study, four (the Hennigan, Lee, Murphy and Agassiz schools) were located near already existing recreational facilities administered either by the Parks and Recreation Department (PRD) or the Metropolitan District Commission (MDC).

In Boston, the impetus for this arrangement has been that many of the neighborhoods needing new schools have been very densely developed and the amount of land needed to fulfill the open space requirements of the state have been generally unavailable in these areas. By siting the school next to existing facilities, state requirements can be satisfied with a minimum of land-taking.

In addition, it was hoped that this policy would help reduce some of the conflict between school and community open space needs. In cases where community

schools relied solely on their own open space areas with no access to an adjoining facility, community leaders complained about the lack of adequate space for their activity needs and school administrators complained about the damage done to both the school and the schoolyard by teenagers who hung around the building at night. By separating the school building from the bulk of the open space facilities, it was hoped that both community and school complaints could be satisfied at once.*

What's Happening?

In the four schools with adjoining open spaces which were studied, we did not find much support for the notion of satisfying open space requirements via land that was both physically and administratively distinct from the school. On physical grounds alone, there were several reasons for this. First, the problem of distance is very real at these schools. In three of the four cases, principals and teachers reported that they rarely used the adjoining playground, primarily due to its distance from the school. In the space of a twenty minute recess period, they found it impossible to bring children to and from the playground while still giving them an adequate period of playtime once there. This is especially true at the Murphy School, where the school entrances are at the opposite side of the building from the field. However, even where entra location was not as extreme a problem (e.g., the ...nigan and Lee schools),

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*After thirty-five years in operation, the Jointly Operated Playgrounds Program of New York (a program similar to Boston's school-playground program) has demonstrated a third possible impetus for this arrangement: land-banking. In this way, the playground land is safe from development until the school feels the need to expand. In New York when this has happened, the playgrounds have frequently been scrapped for the larger school. As a result, although the open space needs of the expanded school are even greater than they had previously been, the total amount of space itself has been drastically reduced.

The Jointly Operated Playgrounds Program seems to be slowly dying in New York as maintenance and other administrative difficulties make the operation unviable.

distance was still cited as the primary reason for non-use of the playground facility. Time is not the only concern; also involved are questions of safety and supervision as discussed earlier.* The issue of supervision seems to be especially complex under these conditions. Many of the adjacent playgrounds are too large and open for easy supervision. At the Lee School, for example, teachers complain that when they use Franklin Field, some children cut out via the field for the rest of the day. Only at the Agassiz School, where the Parks and Recreation Department field is fairly close to the building (e.g., closer than the basketball courts at the Marshall School), was distance not cited as a problem. Yet even here the principal reported that they used the fields less than the other outdoor areas.

The second problem facing these schools is the amount and kinds of open space still remaining around them. The playgrounds tend to include large open areas for games such as softball and areas with deteriorating pieces of totlot equipment or broken basketball courts. They tend not to include hard-top areas suitable for recess purposes. However, architects designing the open space immediately surrounding the school have not provided hard-top areas suitable for recess either. For reasons of efficiency, convenience and safety, however, most of the schools' outdoor activities occur in

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*Lack of control over the open space and competition with other groups for its use may lead some teachers and community coordinators to think of the open space as being even more distant than it is. The issue of perceived distance as related to those properties seen as belonging to the school versus those which do not appears to be important here. In most cases, teachers of schools adjoining playgrounds complained about this distance problem, whereas teachers in schools containing their own open space facilities never complained of this, although, in some instances, the distance travelled was almost the same! This suggests that the distinction between school and non-school space leaves the teacher feeling farther away from the school and, hence, less secure about being there than does use of school property, regardless of absolute distances. One of the design elements contributing to this sense of distance and separation is the fencing around the playground which must be crossed in order to gain access.

these immediately-surrounding areas. These activities, moreover (e.g., recess, line-up, and sometimes physical education) demand hard-topped areas of a large enough size to accommodate large numbers of children at one time. We heard complaints from all four of the schools about the inadequate size of their hard-topped areas. In several cases, even if the existing areas were hard-topped, they would not be adequate for school programs because of their size and shape. This is a serious concern for these schools because it limits not only the kinds of activities that can occur outdoors, but also the desire to use the outside at all.

A third problem concerns equipment and the condition of it. At three of the four schools,* where the adjacent playground had equipment, little, if any, was provided close to the school. This has been disadvantageous for several reasons: at the Murphy and Lee schools, the totlot and basketball facilities of the adjoining playgrounds are in very poor condition. Therefore, the students at these schools do not benefit from the newer equipment installed at schools not forced to share adjoining facilities. At the Murphy and Hennigan schools, moreover, these facilities are so far from the school that they have virtually no useful connection to it. Although the condition of this equipment is a set-back for the school program, it is particularly troublesome for the community program. By expecting a new community school program to use existing community facilities, both the new program and the community as a whole feel cheated as a result. The former feels that the old worn-out, unimproved facilities do not meet their new and expanding needs, while the community feels it has been cheated out of a newer and, perhaps, better facility in addition to the existing one. And many of these neighborhoods do not have enough outdoor facilities as it is. By centering additional demand on the existing space--via the new program--even less open space opportunity remains.

Use conflicts also arise with regard to these facilities. For the school program difficulties occur when community residents who are not in the school wish to use the "public" facilities (particularly the basketball courts) at the same time as the school would like to use them. In most cases, principals deferred from using these facilities rather than confront the

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*The Agassiz being the exception.

non-school users on a regular basis. The community school program also faces competition from general community use; it must fit its own activities within the Parks and Recreation Department's schedule for use of their open space. Other league games--not of community school origin--are popular during the summer and keep the field schedule quite full. Because of difficulties with scheduling and with the condition of equipment, the basketball and baseball league teams of both the Agassiz and Murphy schools were bussed to other facilities for practice and for games.

The final administrative hassle here deals with maintenance. Neither school nor community program has the authority to influence maintenance of PRD or MDC playgrounds. In some cases, this is not a problem; during the summer months, at least, these agencies often maintain their facilities better than the school custodians maintain the school's open space areas. However, since most of the official PRD/MDC activities occur during the summer, their facilities are not maintained on a year round basis, in spite of the fact that they could be used by the community school program during other times of the year. The community coordinators feel they have no recourse to change this practice, just as neither the school nor community program has power to enforce other changes to the facilities which might better suit their needs.

A Solution for Hanging?

One of the secondary rationales for locating community schools next to separate playgrounds was that teenagers would hang around in the parks after hours and not at the school. This issue is understandably a real concern to PFD, since kids hanging around school have, in many instances, caused very costly damages to them.

Unfortunately, we have not found any differences in hanging activity between the two types of schools. This is not so surprising if we consider the activity itself. Observers (e.g., the Zeisel team in the Vandalism study) have pointed out that "hangers" likely to cause trouble use three criteria in choosing a good spot: (1) that it be a place from which one can easily observe others but from which one cannot be easily observed, (2) that it be fairly comfortable as it is used for many hours; and (3) that it is secure from intruders (cops, other adults, other kids). Most of the ballfields and playgrounds adjoining the

schools in the study are too open and lacking in amenities (e.g., benches) to fulfill these criteria. On the other hand, the schools with their hidden niches, steps, bleachers, pavements and walls to lean on, and roofs to climb on are much better suited to this activity. In addition, the community program itself seems to be an attraction and a reason to be around the school. To illustrate the attraction of the school building itself plus the program, the former coordinator of the Agassiz program observed that while this school site, which formerly had been a park/playground, had always been a site for neighborhood kids to hang in, since the school had been built many more kids seem to hang there.

Policy Recommendations

Judging from the observed operations of the existing school/playground arrangements, we would recommend that the Public Facilities Department not continue this practice of locating new community schools adjacent to existing parks and playgrounds. We have found, in general, that these schools adjoining playgrounds, rather than being enhanced by these additional facilities, appear to be worse off because of them. Although rarely used because of problems with distance, safety, supervision, equipment condition, and conflicts of use, the mere existence of the playgrounds has led to the provision of minimal useable space immediately around the school where demand for use is greatest. Consequently, these community schools feel they are inadequately equipped for any kinds of organized outdoor activities, and, in short, that they have been cheated out of "proper" outdoor facilities.

More specifically, there appear to be six basic problems with this arrangement:

Problems

1. The playground is not viewed by either school or community users as part of their legitimate territory; hence, issues of distance, safety and supervision become serious user concerns which discourage utilization of these playground areas. These concerns seem to be founded both on physical grounds (e.g., at the Hennigan and Murphy schools especially, the distances of the playgrounds from the schools are difficult to traverse during recess periods), and on territorial ones, where teachers are clearly less comfortable in a public, non-school space than in one seen as part of the school's territory.

2. The kinds of spaces needed to meet the demands of both school and open space programs are not provided adjacent to the school, as these are expected to be met by the adjoining playground. However, many of these spaces are either missing from or inadequately provided in the playground itself; e.g., sufficient hard-top areas.

3. The playground facilities have not been upgraded to meet the increased demand placed on them by the new school/community center. These programs do not benefit from new equipment such as that installed at schools not forced to share adjoining facilities. In addition, the community as a whole must now share its old (and usually limited) facilities with additional user groups.

4. School and community programs usually do not have free access to the playground facilities, but must share them with other user groups, fitting their programs into an already busy schedule.

5. Because the playgrounds are operated by agencies other than those administering either the school or community programs, the latter have little control over policies of scheduling, maintenance and design changes. The playgrounds are clearly not seen by these programs as "theirs", and this sense of powerlessness decreases the usefulness of these spaces for the programs.

6. Finally, we could find no difference in "hanging" patterns between schools with their own open space facilities and those next to playgrounds. This is, therefore, a poor rationale for placing schools next to existing playgrounds.

On the other hand, building a school equipped entirely with its own open space facilities requires a significant parcel of land, something not readily available in the city. We recognize, therefore, that there are times when the "best solution" for a particular neighborhood might be this school/playground arrangement. Under these circumstances, we recommend that PFD consider the following design policy guidelines:

Recommendations

1. In siting the school, be concerned with minimizing the distance between the playground and the building. In particular, the areas of the school devoted to classroom uses should be easily accessible to the playground entrance. In addition, the playground should be visible from the community area of the school. The relationship between school and playground should be such that the playground will appear to be part of the school's open space facilities.

2. Make sure the playground facilities will adequately meet the needs, as stated in this report, of both school and community programs. This includes consideration of both equipment and spatial needs (e.g., is the equipment in adequate condition to withstand this additional use? Are facilities regulation-size to meet community needs?) If the existing facility is inadequate in this regard, the PFD must work with the agency administering the playground to make the necessary changes. The PFD must follow-through to ensure that these changes are implemented at the time that the school is ready for occupancy. (In several cases, changes have been promised, but have not, as yet, been implemented.) In addition, an effort must be made to provide these facilities around the school itself where space permits.

3. Under any circumstances, some spaces--an adequate recess space and line-up space as bare minimum--should be provided next to the school itself.

4. This school/playground arrangement should not be considered in neighborhoods where pressure on existing open space facilities is already great.

5. Clear lines of responsibility and accessibility must be established prior to the school's opening. Who can use the playground spaces when? This must be worked out between the school programs, the community programs, and the scheduling agency for the playground. Will the school and community be given adequate time to use the facility? If not, what substitute facilities should be placed around the school itself?

6. The playground facility, community program and the school program should ideally be administered by a single agency. Barring this, a reduction from the present tri-agency situation (PFD, School Department, and either PRD or MDC) would at least serve to reduce some of the present conflict. Given the present inefficiencies and under-staffing found in all of these agencies, it is difficult to recommend any one for this extra load. We would, however, recommend that at least the community program and the playground be administered by a single agency.